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THE WOMEN OF SHAKESPEARE

L. Lewes

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THE WOMEN OF SHAKESPEARE

BY

LOUIS LEWES, PH.D.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

HELEN ZIMMERN

NEW YORK: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
LONDON: HODDER BROTHERS
1895

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

IT may be said, slightly paraphrasing the words of Scripture, that of making many books concerning the great writers of the world there is no end. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Milton, Molière, Cervantes, to name but a few of the elect, seem to attract the commentator, the elucidator, the essayist, as the flower attracts the bee. At times we are inclined to feel impatient concerning this tendency, and the wish arises that folk should comment great authors less and would read them more; would more take to heart the lessons that these mighty ones have been called to teach. But a moment's calm reflection forces us to recognise the injustice of our impatient attitude. A great writer and thinker is like a well-cut highly polished diamond—that is to say, he presents a number of facets from each of which is reflected an intense ray of that light which is itself a subdivided emanation from one vast central source. Now the ordinary reader, as a rule, resembles the single facet. He perceives only one section of the matter presented to him, either from lack of previous knowledge of the theme treated, or from idiosyncrasy, which causes him to be more attracted to one aspect of his author's character than to another. Our meaning can be easily illustrated by a reference to Dante. There are those who read the sombre Italian purely with an eye to his theology. Others attach more importance to his political views, and see in him a precursor of Italian unity. Others again read him only on account of the stories he relates; and yet others seek in

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his pages for materials concerning the scandals of his time. Nor is the list ended herewith.

Shakespeare, the great English poet, does not perhaps present such crassly opposed facets as Dante, but he too, to use his own words, has "an infinite variety," and can be studied under many different aspects. And each such careful study devoted to the poet enlarges our vision and comprehension regarding him, and causes us to appreciate more fully his mental vastness. Now, of Shakespeare's *dramatis personæ*, his women are perhaps the most attractive, and also, in a sense, his most original creations, so different are they, as a whole, from the ideals of the feminine type prevalent in the literature of his day. Dr. Lewes is not the first to write of Shakespeare's women; the ground has been gone over before, a fact he frankly acknowledges; but of the few who have written of Shakespeare's heroines, as apart from the male characters and the dramas as a whole, only Mrs. Jameson's book, "Characteristics of Women," can really challenge comparison with that of the German author. Lady Martin's "Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters" is not exhaustive. It only deals with a few, and with these rather from a histrionic than a critical point of view. In her essays on Shakespeare's women, embodied in the form of letters to various friends, Lady Martin furnishes us with recollections of her own theatrical life, and of her personal impressions when personating the various types, impressions interesting, and often suggestive, but scarcely to be ranked as critical studies. Dr. Lewes, like a thorough-going German, leaves no female character unnoticed or unexamined. What is especially interesting in his work, and endows it with a pronounced originality, is its chronological method. The book is conceived in an eminently modern spirit. Dr. Lewes does not, like Mrs. Jameson, classify Shakespeare's women under the more or less arbitrary heading of Historical characters, characters of Intellect, of Passion, of Imagination, of the

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Affections. He analyses Shakespeare's own life and character from the evolutionary point of view, and demonstrates from this how the characters created by the poet were also of necessity subjected to this psychological process. He begins with the Venus of "Venus and Adonis," Shakespeare's youthful poem, and ends with Queen Catherine, perhaps one of the ripest and most wonderful of Shakespeare's portraits, the very queen of earthly queens, reproduced in all her womanhood, wisdom, nobility, and gentleness, to quote King Henry's own assertion.

It is not, however, my province here to analyse Dr. Lewes's book. It speaks for itself, and will surely excite the same interest and meet with the same favour in Shakespeare's native land that it has met with in Germany, the country where he has always been so lovingly and accurately studied, and where more has been written about him than in England itself. The extracts from Shakespeare quoted in these pages have been taken from the text of the Globe edition, published by Messrs. Macmillan, whose kind courtesy in permitting this is herewith gratefully acknowledged.

HELEN ZIMMERN.

FLORENCE, *June* 1, 1894.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE aim of this book, which is to speak of Shakespeare's women to a cultivated circle of German readers, is at one and the same time easy and hard. The task is easy, because whoever writes of Shakespeare for cultivated readers, does not treat of a stranger to strangers, but of a friend to friends, of a favourite whose name is as dear and familiar to such readers as those of their own great masters; because he writes for readers to whom the word Shakespeare is identified with the memory of hours consecrated to the noblest enjoyment; for readers who greet in Shakespeare a faithful and proved friend, a true confident and adviser. In the same manner as the English made our great musical genius, Handel, their own, and unselfishly granted to him the first place in the kingdom of sound, so have we Germans given to the great Englishman the right of citizenship in our hearts as well as in our literature, and made him ours. Shakespeare has been born again on German soil, to extended honour and to powerful influence. German minds have promoted the deeper comprehension of the most deep-souled of all dramatists even among his own countrymen. His immortal dramas are the intellectual property of all cultivated Germans. We are accustomed to look upon the masterly translations they have found in our tongue as classic, belonging to our own literature. But if the thought of treating a subject which is certain to arouse the most sympathetic attention of the reader renders our task on the one hand easy and pleasant, there exists on the other a

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circumstance which makes it extremely difficult. The writer finds himself confronted on the part of most of his readers by preconceived complete and final conclusions concerning his theme, and on the part of all by a mass of recollections and theories which make it arduous, if not impossible, to furnish them with something new. The greatest German historians, critics, and poets have devoted their highest powers to the appreciation, explanation, and translation of this most many-sided of all dramatists, so that it becomes a heavy task in this field, where such rich harvests have already been reaped, to glean enough to give a satisfactory answer to the question, what purpose is served by adding yet another to the already numerous books on Shakespeare? Not to lose courage under such circumstances, the writer needs the reader's kind indulgence, which he hopes to win as his modest due, if he states from the outset that he cannot promise to say much that is new, or to tell his readers much they do not already know. He prefers to imagine that he has undertaken in their company a delightful voyage, rich in enjoyment, of which he wishes to refresh and bring into mutual relation their common memories. He wishes to bring before them the principal female characters created by the poet, as they live in the memory of each one, and he will have attained his aim if those who have read his book are convinced that the most profound of dramatists, who left hardly a note in the life of the soul and mind of man untouched by his consummate skill, was equally able to explore the heart of woman to its inmost depths, and to set before us not only all that is noble and beautiful, but also all that is frightful and terrible in female humanity, in the shape of figures full of life and truth to nature. But the writer of this book has still another aim. He desires, namely, that the reader, on closing it, may have arrived at the conviction that Realism and Idealism are no irreconcilable contradictions; that it is rather the task of true and real genius to bring them into exalted union.

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Shakespeare was certainly the most powerful realist among poets of all times and of all peoples; his characters are true—humanly true—to their inmost marrow, and even the most incarnate realist will not find it easy, if he is discerning and sincere, to reproach him with the favourite stock phrase concerning "conventional falsehoods." Nevertheless Shakespeare was also one of the greatest idealists known to the literature of the world. He shrinks from no theme, let it look never so ugly, from no truth, let it sound never so hard, but, with few exceptions, of which I shall mention and criticise one of the ugliest, he clothes his figures in the garb of artistic beauty. A comparison will show what I mean. The old Greek fables tell us that man was created out of one of the commonest of materials, clay. But he who made him was Prometheus, the same Prometheus who robbed the gods of the heavenly spark of fire and was able to breathe it into his creations. Herein, it seems to me, is symbolised that union between Realism and Idealism which is the highest aim of true genius, and which has raised up such a dust-storm in modern literature. Out of mere clay nothing can be made; some of the Promethean spirit is needed beside. Clay abounds in this world, but the Prometheuses are rare, and not every one is a Prometheus who holds himself one. This book, however, will have something to tell of such a Prometheus in the highest and truest sense of the name.

But while the writer does not flatter himself that he will bring forward much that is new, still he believes that the manner in which his material is presented, and, if he may say so, in that which he does not and will not touch upon, he will have trodden a new and therefore suggestive path. Two quotations from our own Goethe seem to him to define the methods that have been followed by even the ablest commentators and interpreters of Shakespeare, though in quite different ways and different degrees, in their explanations and characterisations. One is written in the first act

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of "Faust," where the Master answers the remark of the scholar Wagner, how elevated an enjoyment it is to transport oneself into the spirit of the time:

> That which you call the spirit of the time
> Is at its root the spirit of the man,
> In which the times do find themselves reflected.

These same methods with which Faust here reproaches the student of the spirit of the time have been applied in various ways by critics and literary historians to the poets whom they explain and annotate. They transplant their own thoughts, their own theories and impressions, into their author's work, believing that they have followed him into the innermost sanctuary of his thoughts and experiences, while making him say or suppose things that perhaps never once in his whole life crossed his brain, attributing to him motives which never entered his thoughts; in a word, they proceed, as is described in the other passage from Goethe which I have in mind. The ragged demagogue Vansen says, in the fourth act of "Egmont," to the burghers of Brussels, in order to show what dangers await a man who is threatened with political prosecution, no matter how innocent he be: "When there is nothing to be got out of a man's words, they read a meaning into them."

Many, and among them some of the most celebrated exponents of Shakespeare, interrogate the poet in this wise. They approach him with certain preconceived judgments ready formulated in their brains; they believe that they have discovered a precise fundamental idea, as they call it, in each play, for the sake of whose development it was written, and they give themselves infinite trouble to bring all the divisions and characters of the drama into agreement with this fundamental idea, proving that these arguments serve to establish it. It is inevitable that, with such a procedure, violence should sometimes be done to the poet, and that allusions and intentions should be fathered upon him

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which exist only in the mind of the critic, and were quite foreign to the poet commentated.

Now it is in contradiction to that free flight of fancy which is inseparable from any distinguished poetical performance that such works should be used to carry out any fixed and sharply limited fundamental idea. Think, for instance, of the "Merchant of Venice." Is it probable, nay, is it conceivable, that the poet undertook this work, so endlessly rich and full of the emotions and feelings of the human heart, a work which sets forth the most terrible passions as well as the noblest and purest manifestations of human nature, with the preconceived idea that he would this time set forth the relations in which certain classes and characters stand to each other, as has been attributed to him by one of the most renowned Shakespearian commentators? Is it conceivable that the poet had in view, in such a work, purposely and consciously so narrow and limited a scope, thus reducing, one may almost say crushing, the highest poetic fancy and invention into a didactic argument? Impossible. Obviously certain universal truths and teachings come to the front in every important poetical work, and hence also in the "Merchant of Venice" as in Shakespeare's other dramas, so that the incidents which are represented in the same seem to be to a certain point conclusive. But the poet has not set himself to work with the settled didactic intention of pointing out these truths or of developing those so called fundamental ideas. These arise naturally and spontaneously from the manner in which his characters are developed, the methods whereby the conflicts between them arise and are disentangled, and this the more clearly and effectually the greater is the genius of the poet, the more the single characters created by him, their works and actions, approach the universal truths of humanity, the more they are in agreement with the fundamental and eternal foundations of human knowledge. It is, however, impossible, except by means of contorted or unnatural interpretations, to bring all the

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divisions of a drama, all the features which conduce to the presentation of its separate characters, into agreement with and relation to this fundamental idea, as has been so often tried with Shakespeare and with other dramatists; and this is particularly the case with Shakespeare. The manner in which he has put together the material of his dramas is quite opposite to the theory that he set himself the task with the intention of carrying out some philosophical or moral conception through its medium. Hence at the very outset, the attempt to discover any such aim is a thankless, nay, indeed, an impossible job, unless violence is done to the poet and his work. The source of his Roman tragedies is Plutarch, whom he follows with the greatest accuracy and precision, often literally transcribing his words. In the plays drawn from English history, he follows as accurately, and often as textually, the Chronicles and historical narratives in which are related the events of which he wishes to treat. Finally, in the plays which we call imaginative, he rarely uses absolutely new material, but takes for the foundation of his poem some older narrative, drama, or tale, whose contents and actions he transforms artistically. Besides this, he also inclines to let several distinct fables develop themselves side by side, entwining them with each other. This, which is an aspect of his technique that has been often noted, of itself suffices to show plainly that the didactic aim falsely attributed to him has no existence. On this account the author of this book will never seek to discover the fundamental idea of any single play, or force its various arrangements and characters into agreement with such a preconceived idea. He will never seek to inspire the poet or read out his own thoughts from between Shakespeare's lines, but will ever be occupied with his proper aim, that of developing and illustrating the female characters who are his theme, touching, however, on the other personages, and the whole tenor and nature of the play, wherever this is required for their more complete comprehension. He will take pains not to assert anything which

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he cannot justify from the poet's own words when rightly understood. He will strive, in passing judgment on Shakespeare's works and his poetical activity, to hold himself, above all things, in the safe middle term, between, on the one hand, the measureless idolatry which sees in every work of this poet the rounded and complete ideal of perfection, exalting him even at the expense of our own great dramatists; and, on the other, the equally measureless depreciation of his works which now seems to be coming into fashion: a reaction, perhaps, from the before-mentioned idolatry, which, however, dates back to an earlier school of criticism, of which one member, Voltaire, was not ashamed to call "Hamlet" "the work of a drunken savage." Finally, I shall hold myself quite aloof from the quarrel which has broken out over the personality of the poet Shakespeare himself, owing to a voice which has declared that the poems and plays were due to the pen of Bacon the philosopher, while Shakespeare merely lent his name. The polemic aroused by this bold assertion has certainly led every impartial judge to the following conclusion: that the right of the player and poet William Shakespeare to the authorship of his poems and plays cannot be arraigned, and that even if some of them appear to have been the work of several hands, and if the Shakespearian authorship of some plays is doubtful, whether they are really entirely or only partly or absolutely not his work, still Bacon's authorship is not to be contemplated. For me this controversy, which, however, hardly deserves to be called so any more, is decided by one single circumstance, namely, by the fact that the Sonnets, which from external and internal evidence are admitted to be Shakespeare's own, in innumerable places bear the distinct traces of the hand that wrote the plays; so that Bacon, if he wrote the plays, must also have written the Sonnets, which hypothesis is absolutely excluded from the discussion.

With regard to the plan of this book, it is necessary first of all, in order to obtain the right standpoint from which to

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judge Shakespeare, to rear a satisfactory foundation in two directions. First, the age whence such a poet arose must be described in its action and its influence, since even the greatest and most powerful of men can only be rightly understood in relation to a right understanding of the times to which they belong. Our second task will be the description of the rise and development of dramatic poetry prior to Shakespeare's appearance, for without some knowledge of the dramatic poetry that preceded Shakespeare many of his own striking characteristics, especially those of his youthful period, cannot be properly judged or understood. There must also be some short account of the poet's life, as far as the very sparse and often doubtful indications regarding it will permit, because this too furnishes very important indications towards the appreciation of his poetical development and towards the proper comprehension of his works. This will link on with an attempt to set forth, as far as feasible, the chronological sequence of the works, in order that the most prominent female figures which meet us in these poems may be described and characterised in their chronological succession.

LOUIS LEWES.

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SHAKESPEARE'S WOMEN

CHAPTER I

SHAKESPEARE'S TIMES

IT is an axiom derived from the experience of all who reflect on such subjects, and too firmly established to need further demonstration, that the achievements of such great and remarkable men as have marked an epoch in the spiritual, scientific, or political life of their own people and of humanity, are composed of two factors—namely, that which they have created by their own intellect, by their idiosyncrasy and gifts, by the nature of their character, and the innate tendency of their individual moral and spiritual development; and that which they have derived from those influences which the struggles of a long past have exercised over all the domains of a spiritual and moral life, over the intellect and circumstances among which they lived, and of which they of necessity felt the effects. For even the mightiest, most independent spirits, even those who have caused the most wonderful revolutions in the realms of human activity, who have contributed in the highest degree to the development of the human race, stand upon the shoulders of the past, and build upon the foundations which have been laid down, both by those great spirits who have preceded them, and by the united activity of mankind. On the other hand, they are dependent upon the times in which they live, and cannot escape those

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influences which the state of morals and surroundings exert upon them, and which, to use the expression invented by the leader of the French realistic novelists, Emile Zola, compose the *milieu* which to a certain extent controls and limits their activity. Indeed, it is a fact often observed, that those great men who were most deeply rooted in their epoch, who were at once the highest and the most complete expression of the aims and ideas that moved those times, have exerted the most powerful influence upon the progress and development of their contemporaries and of humanity in general; while others, even though they had intellects as commanding, and were as strong and energetic in character, who believed that they could emancipate themselves from their age, who, to use the common expression, were ahead of their time, or sought to be so, have striven in vain, and have been deceived in their hopes of advancing humanity rapidly—nay, have sometimes failed hopelessly.

Even Shakespeare himself was subject to this fundamental principle. His powerful and all-embracing spirit could not free itself either from the influence of his predecessors in the domain which he swayed so mightily, or from the domination of his age, of the spirit that moved it, and the circumstances that created it. There was even a time when literary criticism went so far in its conviction regarding Shakespeare's dependence upon his era and his immediate forerunners, as to describe the poet as a brilliantly endowed self-taught realist, who sometimes succeeded, by virtue of his genius, in overcoming the roughness of the models he had chosen from the works of his predecessors, as well as the license and coarseness of the period itself, but who was in the long-run overcome by them. This opinion is now out of date, and one can hardly imagine, recalling Shakespeare's profoundest and finest tragedies, how it could ever have obtained a hearing. Amongst the prominent thinkers who endorsed this unjust and sweeping verdict

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was Voltaire, whom I have already mentioned as having spoken of Hamlet as "the work of a drunken savage." Frederick II. of Prussia, too, expressed a similar opinion on Shakespeare, and of all dramas designed and carried out in his manner. In these men, to whom the possession of great intellectual capacity cannot be denied, the source of their incongruous judgments was simply a foregone conclusion, founded upon the fixed theory of the unities of time and place.

This theory, as Lessing has triumphantly proved, was based simply on a mistaken interpretation of one of Aristotle's art rules, which governed with unquestioned sovereignty the French self-styled classical drama. Whatever departed from this rule appeared to these men as rough and wanting in taste. It was indeed quite natural that to those who approached dramatic work with such views, Shakespeare's plays must have appeared monstrous and shocking. For his stage was the wide world. His action often embraced whole lives, and moved from one country to another. In some plays there even appear personages who in the first act are not yet born, and who in the third assume important parts. For unprejudiced judges, however, even if they know nothing of the grand development which England reached under her great, though, from the point of view of posterity, scarcely amiable Queen Elizabeth, Shakespeare's dramatic works must lead to a favourable conclusion as to the nature and character of a time which gave birth to such masterpieces of poetry. Such a conclusion would be quite correct, for the age of Elizabeth marks one of the most prominent altitudes in the intellectual, political, and national development of England. Certainly, if we adopt the measures now in use for gauging the satisfactory condition of a state, of its happiness, or of the enviable condition of the people, the realm of England under its Virgin Queen will not precisely resemble the ideal of perfection, even in a remote degree. Of liberty in the modern sense, of the equal divi-

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sion of power in the constitutional sense, as now understood, between the legislative and executive branches of government, of freedom of the press, and other guarantees, to which we are accustomed to look as the bulwarks and safeguards of our civil, political, and personal freedom, there was not a trace in the England of Elizabeth. This regent, who, in most of her political acts, showed herself a wise and high-minded ruler, who was far from imitating the violent and often bloodthirsty tyranny exercised by her father, Henry VIII., was nevertheless extraordinarily proud and imperious, clinging with an iron grasp to even the smallest item of that autocratic regal power which she believed to have been given to her by the grace of God, on which account she held herself to be under the special protection of Heaven. Parliament had often to listen to harsh words from her, if it concerned itself about things which in her opinion were out of its jurisdiction, and yet these were things which, from a constitutional point of view, were quite within the domain of a legislative assembly. She claimed, besides, with great energy, the right to veto, by virtue of her sovereign prerogative, acts and ordinances which had been passed by Parliament. Elizabeth very especially hindered or forbade every interference of Parliament with the affairs of the Church, over which she claimed for herself absolute jurisdiction, true to her father's example. The power to assert and enforce such claims had been obtained by the English monarchs owing to the attitude taken by England in that severance from the Roman See which led only by secondary paths and in consequence of circumstances to what is called the Reformation. This great change occurred in England not through a common and irresistible movement on the part of the people, but through the autocratic word of a despotic king, who found his dependence on Rome a hindrance to the satisfaction of a sensual passion for a woman, and hence determined to sever it. In the mode of procedure adopted by Henry

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VIII., in the direction he gave to his measures, in what he created as well as in what he destroyed, there is little to be found of that which is usually called a Reformation. In place of the Pope, he made himself the infallible and uncontrolled head of the English Church. He suppressed the monastic orders in order to possess himself of their property, but he left untouched to a great extent the fabric of the Catholic dogma, and made no comprehensive changes in the ritual of the Church. It was obvious that the king, who could enforce his ecclesiastical authority by all the worldly means in his power, should exercise a far heavier and more tyrannical empire over that Church than the Pope, whose seat was in far distant Rome, and who had to confine himself to spiritual weapons, while upon the despotic will of the King of England hung the lives and the property of all his subjects. With a wave of his hand or a glance of his eye he could carry out his desires. Hence it was on pain of death that any man fell away from the so-called six articles of belief which had been proclaimed by royal decree and confirmed by the helpless Parliament. These articles were fast anchored to the principal points of the Catholic dogma and ritual. Transubstantiation—that is, the changing of the sacrificial bread into the body of Christ—was taught; the cup was denied to the laity; private Masses were declared effectual; the celibacy of the clergy and auricular confession were declared necessary. Many brave and innocent men, who in belief and utterance had gone in the direction of the Reformation far beyond the six articles, were burnt as heretics, and many who, on the other hand, held fast to the supremacy of the Pope, were beheaded as traitors.

The events which occurred in England during the reign of Henry VIII., and for ten years after his death, are described by Schiller in his *Maria Stuart* in the following bitterly sarcastic lines:

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I see this high nobility of England,
The proud majestic Senate of the kingdom,
As slaves of the Serail the Sultan's will,
Flatter King Henry Eighth, my stern great uncle;
I see, besides, this noble upper house,
As willingly as do the venal Commons,
Promulgate laws and then depreciate them,
Bind and unloose the bonds of matrimony
As with the power of the Almighty. Now
I see an English princess disinherited,
And branded with a bastard's shameful title;
The morrow sees her crowned and hailed as Queen.
I see these worthy peers, with swift conviction,
Under four reigns, four times change their belief.

The first of these changes of religion, commanded from above, and imposed upon the entire people, was that already mentioned, which proceeded from Henry VIII. Under the short reign of his son, Edward VI., there was a nearer approach to the Protestant tendency, such as had developed on the Continent of Europe, and which, with some modifications, was now raised to the rank of the State religion. These modifications, however, offended the very spirit of Protestantism, which wrote on its banner the right of free investigation, and led to fierce persecutions of those who still clung to the Catholic faith, causing many innocent and estimable men to mount the bloody scaffold. After Edward's early death, and the swift catastrophe of Lady Jane Grey, there followed Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry, by his marriage with Catherine of Aragon. She subjected the kingdom once more to the authority of the Papal See, and re-established Roman Catholicism as the State and popular religion. Besides this, she exhibited a fanaticism worthy of her husband, Philip of Spain. The pyres blazed for the destruction of Protestant heretics. Indeed, her persecuting fury was such as to win for her in the mouth of the people and in history the name of "Bloody Mary." It was Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry VIII. by his second marriage with the unfortunate Anne

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Bullen, who, succeeding Mary, severed England for ever from the Roman See, and gave to the English Church the position which, under the name of the Anglican Church, still obtains as the State religion. But even she could not attain to a magnanimous tolerance of other forms of belief. Catholics were persecuted because they neither could nor would acknowledge the Queen of England as the head of the Church in place of the Pope. Nor was she, on the other hand, milder towards the so-called Dissenters or Nonconformists, who held aloof from the State religion, inasmuch as it was their opinion that this Anglican Church had retained too many of the articles of belief, and also too many of the vestments and ceremonies of the old Romish superstition, as they called the Catholic religion. All these changes, all these bloody persecutions, occurred without any attempt at resistance sufficiently important to merit the name on the part of the populace. There were isolated and unimportant uprisings under Elizabeth; there were repeated attempts to assassinate the Queen, due to the same religious fanaticism which gave birth to the persecutions from above; but, taken as a whole, the English, so proud of their instincts of freedom, bore all tyranny with patience, though it often broke through the limits which the constitution had established by means of Parliament as a counterpoise to the regal power. Elizabeth repeatedly and systematically committed those violations of the constitution which cost Charles I. both throne and life, and James II. his crown. By simple royal proclamation she promulgated orders without the co-operation of Parliament, to which she gave the full force of law. She kept imprisoned for prolonged terms persons whom she deemed suspicious, or who were merely unpleasant to her, without giving them, as prescribed by law, a judicial hearing. The illegal methods of the rack were employed to extort confession from such accused persons as persisted in obstinate denial of their guilt. The unlawful courts of the Star Chamber and of the High Commission, cited in cases of

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ecclesiastical offences, were flagrant breaches of the popular rights. Offences which we should call violations of the laws controlling the press were punished, when such writings were considered injurious or offensive to the Government, by merciless whipping, by cutting off of ears,—nay, even in some cases by death. Heavy fines were imposed upon such persons as neglected to attend the public services of the Anglican Church.

Another side of Elizabeth's character was her insistence upon flatteries and homage on the part of her courtiers, such as the proudest Continental monarch neither exacted nor received. In spite of all this, however, although it certainly gave cause for dissatisfaction which at the present day would not be borne for a week without a general uprising of the whole nation, any Englishman, if asked what period he considered the greatest and most glorious in the history of his country, would unhesitatingly answer, the age of Elizabeth. Certainly the courtiers of that day were base flatterers, who, aware of Elizabeth's weakness, paid her most unworthy homage, and who, above all, after she had long passed her prime, celebrated her personal charms in a manner which to the cool examination of posterity seems contemptible and ridiculous. But, on the other hand, these times of Queen Elizabeth were richer than any others in heroes, warriors, and sailors, who carried the fame of their country into every quarter of the globe, who fought victorious battles by sea and land, who smote in pieces the proud Armada sent forth by a fanatical despot to reduce a free people to civil and religious servitude. Through their bold enterprises in distant parts of the world, through the foundation of colonies, and the conquest of wide tracts of land and large fruitful islands, they widened the area of their country's trade and multiplied its dependencies. They also awakened the imagination of their compatriots by the variety and strangeness of their adventures, often marvellous and exaggerated enough to be fabulous, by the many new places and men

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they described to the wondering listeners, exciting them in this manner in the highest degree, and inciting them to fresh activity and to the search for empires new. It is true, it was prescribed to the people by royal mandate what they should believe and what reject, and in what outward form they should serve their God, and the execution of these tyrannical edicts were enforced with culpable severity by bloodshed and violence. Some of the clergy, partly from real fanaticism, partly to obtain and keep the favour of the Queen, willingly and zealously lent their aid to the execution of such decrees. On the other hand, we see this entire people, who allowed their belief and its outward form to be thus imposed upon them, rise as one man to defend the independence of their country against a foreign foe, and to drive off the Spaniard who would have brought back the Inquisition and the days of Bloody Mary. And besides these obsequious pastors there stood the boldest thinkers and philosophers, who sowed the seeds of enlightenment which ere long were to bring forth the most brilliant harvests, calling into active exercise that essential kernel of Protestantism, the right of private judgment in matters of the highest moment to the human mind. With these thinkers and philosophers were ranged poets who at one stroke placed English literature in the first rank of the literature of the world; and in one branch of poetry, the drama, reached a height which has hardly ever been attained before or since. The character and the writings of the greatest of English poets, who, in spite of certain objections, must always be recognised as deserving the foremost place among the dramatic poets of the whole world, are in close relation to the life and spirit of his time. An exhaustive idea of the personality and power of this poet is not obtained by taking into account his skill in versification and the great variety of his characters, which shake us to our inmost depths by their power and terror, and again charm us in the highest degree by their loveliness, nor by the irresistible mirth and

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kindliness of his humour, nor the intellectual depth of his psychological motives. His intelligent patriotism, and his prudent practical views in almost every branch of human life and activity, also form an important portion of his greatness, and therefore of his title to fame. To give one proof only of his glowing love for his beautiful English fatherland, what poet has ever praised the greatness and the beauty of his country in finer words than Shakespeare in the verses which, in *Richard II.*, he puts into the mouth of the dying John of Gaunt, Earl of Lancaster:—

> This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demi-paradise,
> This fortress, built by Nature for herself
> Against infection and the hand of war,
> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> Which serves it in the office of a wall,
> Or as a moat defensive to a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands,
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
> This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
> Fear'd by their breed, and famous by their birth,
> Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
> For Christian service and true chivalry,
> As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry,
> Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son,
> This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
> Dear for her reputation through the world.
>
> *Richard II.*, act ii. scene i.

If the question be put, How must an age be constituted in order to be capable of producing great minds and to favour their development? it will be found that the whole history of the development of human culture furnishes the answer. Thus it will be seen that those ages are best adapted to this end in which the opinions and convictions of the intellectual, active, and ruling classes of the people are wholly in agreement, as regards all important matters, with the efforts of the Government, let this be constituted as

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it may. Further, it is requisite that the people should have the tranquillising conviction that in all domains of public life, measures of progress and improvement are being applied, a conviction that is of itself a spur towards renewed efforts on their part. If any age in English history has responded to these conditions, this was the case in a striking degree in the time of Queen Elizabeth. Even the hateful side of that period, and of Elizabeth's system of government, characteristic of all the rulers in her family, that tendency, viz., to despotism, that steady propensity on the part of the royal authority to overstep the bounds of the constitution, and the ever-renewed attempts made against the rights of the people, will appear to us in a milder and less ungracious light if we cease to compare them with the circumstances of our own day, cease to make use of our own points of view, which are accustomed to such very different standards. We should rather consider certain other circumstances which must have exerted a great influence at that time. Indeed, this attitude is absolutely necessary in order to judge the men and the events of other epochs with justice and impartiality. For example, a great and fundamental difference exists between the development of public affairs as they occurred in England, and those which history records of the kingdoms of the Continent, especially of France. Here the feudal monarchy of the Middle Ages, after the power of the great tributaries had been broken, changed into an absolute unlimited despotism, into the most pronounced royal autocracy. Such a development was only possible because these monarchs had understood the necessity of assuring to themselves the aid of a strong well-disciplined standing army. This placed them in a position to safeguard their absolute authority against the already shaken power of the great nobles, and the unarmed, helpless mass of the common people, and so secure themselves from all attacks from either. This aid was lacking to the English kings. Hence, although apparently and outwardly they issued with success from the

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terrible Civil War that raged because of the succession between the rival princely houses of York and Lancaster, which destroyed so many of the nobility, and decimated the civic and agricultural classes on most bloody battlefields, or destroyed them by means of no less bloody trials on the scaffold, yet, as they were without this terrible and only effectual means of coercion, they were never able to achieve absolute monarchy in England. Nor must it be forgotten that the populace, who had suffered terribly during these wars, regarded the monarchical power as that which had re-established order and quiet in the land, enabling them once more to go about their occupations in peace and to return to relative prosperity. Therefore they were quite willing to suffer that their rulers, and above all their admired and beloved Queen Elizabeth, should transgress from time to time the limits of constitutional authority. But, in spite of this inclination on the part of the populace to accept these breaches of the constitution instead of meeting them with energetic contradiction or with formal opposition, there was inherent in the circumstances a factor that made it impossible to change these relations into a complete and permanent system of absolute royal authority; and this, too, despite the fact that in those days there were wholly wanting those safeguards of the civil and political liberty of the subject now so highly prized and so eagerly sought, which have been, in truth, discovered and established with sense, earnestness, and energy—safeguards such as the freedom of the press, the right of combination, and of assembly, these immovable landmarks of the boundary between the right to make laws and the power to enforce them—the Government in every danger, in every threatened invasion from without was simply dependent upon the good-will of the people. When the terrible Spanish Armada threatened to attack England, to destroy the whole existence of all that was dear and sacred to its people, to sweep away their entire political and religious independence, nay, their very existence,

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not merely to deprive them of some single right or privilege, as their own monarchs had done, Elizabeth had to turn to the authorities of her capital. She asked them what they were prepared and willing to do in order to save their threatened fatherland from the impending danger, and informed them in how far she counted upon their aid. She received the gratifying answer that the capital entreated she would accept, "as a token of their absolute affection and submission," twice the amount she had asked for. Macaulay says with perfect truth that a people who could furnish such a proof of loyalty could never long have been ill-governed with impunity. Elizabeth understood this perfectly well. Her greatness, as well as the brilliant results of her reign, were due in no small degree to the power which she had the wisdom and prudence to exert over herself, through which she controlled her inborn and inherited inclination towards self-willed and arbitrary modes of procedure. While she delighted in ruling despotically those who most nearly surrounded her, thus playing, amid her courtiers, the part of an absolute queen, she knew how to yield at the right time to that powerful stream of public opinion, upon whose affection and adherence the safety and splendour of her throne depended. This is seen most clearly in the conduct of the Queen with regard to the Monopoly question, which gave occasion for a most brilliant proof of her wisdom as a ruler, and her deep insight into the requirements of the time and of public opinion. She began by expressing in the strongest manner her unlimited sovereign power as against the Parliament, and by forbidding in the most unequivocal manner any interference on its part in the internal rule of her realm. This declaration was received with dumb submission. Nevertheless, when the practical question arose that the people complained of their burdens, which threatened to become insupportable, this did not hinder Parliament from being the mouthpiece of their complaints. These were expressed in earnest and

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impressive though submissive and unexceptionable terms. The Queen had granted certain monopolies to various branches of trade, by virtue of her prerogative to settle these things independently of Parliament. Some of these monopolies dealt with the necessaries of life. The natural result was that worthless commodities were sold at high prices, thus bringing great gain to the monopolists, while they imposed heavy hardships, and even injury, on the consuming public, and especially on the lower and poorer classes. Elizabeth yielded to the universal voice of the people thus brought under her notice by Parliament. Without hesitation she annulled all such monopolies, and expressed her gratitude besides to the representatives of her people, who had opened her eyes to their true interests. To such events was due that ideal union which, in England, bound the people and Government together into one body in all really important matters, in spite of certain temporary troubles and misunderstandings. This union led to marked progress in internal affairs, and to a strong and victorious position abroad. Commerce and manufactures flourished, the prosperity of the people increased, the English trading flag floated in the most distant waters, and the English war-standard ruled the seas after the destruction of the mighty maritime power of Spain. All Europe looked up to England. The Protestants regarded her as the bulwark of their faith, the Catholic Princes looked up with respect and awe to the Virgin Queen, who, in spite of her arbitrariness, was a truly wise ruler, and who, in concert with her people, attained to the acme of glory. Thus we see that Shakespeare lived in an active and stirring time, amid a people who had discovered the natural road whereby to attain great and brilliant goals. The England of his time was roused and excited by delight in great enterprises, which resulted in peace at home and in civil liberty, which grew steadily if slowly, notwithstanding occasional disturbances which the need to hold together for the sake of common interests and

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dangers soon allayed. He also found in a brilliant court and a rich and energetic popular life fruitful subjects for his imagination, and for his innate poetic and artistic gifts of production. An able commentator of Shakespeare rightly says that Shakespeare's remark concerning the dramatic poetry of his time, that "it was like a noble racer, who willingly submits to the rein and the rider so that he may reach the goal," might be applied to the whole of England. A very specious objection might be made to this description of the times in which Shakespeare lived and wrote. As a factor calculated to aid materially in the development of his genius, some might contend that such an influence for good must be partly if not wholly destroyed, owing to the religious persecutions that still obtained, to the indifference of the people to their religious faith, and to the enforced changes of dogma and outward expression of the faith which the Government imposed on them, and which they did not withstand. Further, the heavy fetters laid upon the press, and through the press upon open expression of opinions and convictions, could not surely be without their influence. But these objections can be treated in the same manner as the conclusions we are apt to draw regarding the whole period, and the popular opinions which then prevailed, from the temporary attempts of Elizabeth to override, in her desire for absolute government, the bounds set to her by the constitution. These conclusions must necessarily be erroneous if we allow ourselves to be led away by modern ideas, and do not take into consideration how completely all public relations have altered since that day. In attempting to judge of times so different, and so far removed from our own, by modern standards, we can easily fall into drawing very false conclusions. Certainly such attempts on the part of any Government to break through the constitutional safeguards of the rights and liberties of the people would now-a-days be very dangerous, and lead to great disturbances, and would have to be strenuously opposed. Religious persecutions

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also, even if they were possible otherwise than in theory, any interference in fact with the spiritual opinions of a people or their religious observances, any clog upon the press, or any aggressive limitation of its liberty, would have the most fatal effect upon the entire development of our era, and thus prove most unfavourable to the free growth of a poetic genius. The dangers resulting from Elizabeth's transgressions were not as great as they appear when looked at in the light of the present day. Thus, too, the above-named circumstances could not, in relation to Shakespeare's development, have produced that injurious, nay, fatal effect, which they would exert in the present day upon a poetic genius, and which we might infer they would have had then, if we regard the matter from a modern point of view. Perhaps it is not even too bold to assert that if the arrangement of religious relations in England had come about in some other way, if those encroachments from above, that indifference below, had not existed, a poet like Shakespeare might not even have been possible. The sixteenth century beheld the mightiest and most powerfully influential changes in the spiritual realm the world has ever known—changes which ever since have pointed out the way for the continuous development of mankind—changes that extended far beyond the Continent in which they arose, and whose results are still working at the present day. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and the consequent dispersion of learned Greeks throughout Europe, had aroused new interest in the study of the old classic languages and writings. By this means a fermentation was introduced into the scholastic learning of the Middle Ages. This germ was carefully tended and cultivated by Italian, German, and Dutch philologists and so called Humanists. Its growth brought about the most marvellous results, in reawakening the human intellect, so long imprisoned in the fetters of inflexible formalism. This impulsion led to a great unfolding of intellectual activity, of a vigorous and healthy character,

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in every realm of thought. The powerful tool which rendered this result possible, by widening to an unlimited extent the boundaries set to the spread of human thought, was given to mankind in the discovery of the art of printing. To this were added mighty incentives from every quarter. Discoveries in every branch of thought and action followed each other in unbroken succession; brave mariners disclosed to Europeans an immense new world, which opened up endless fields of trade and furnished them with innumerable new natural and industrial products. All this not only gave a higher, brighter, richer character to life, it also roused the imagination of men by novel and often wonderful sights, and diverted their activity into hitherto unknown channels. The arts in Italy and Spain blossomed into a purity and beauty whose like the world has never seen since the era of Pericles; and last, but not least in its results, there began in Germany that religious movement which shook the minds of the people so deeply, and which, though alloyed with worldly considerations of very diverse nature, spread its modifying influence over a great portion of Europe, and so brought about one of the most marked divisions in the history of the world; wherefore the German Reformation is considered, historically, as the beginning of a new era. A forerunner of this movement, Wickliffe, lived and worked in England at a period when the land was wrapped in a deep spiritual slumber, watched sternly by a fanatic priesthood. Through him the Bohemian reformer, John Huss, was aroused, the first who dared to take bold and distinct steps against the Romish Church, on which account he had to die a cruel death amid the flames, for the times were not yet ripe to listen to him. But here already begins the distinction between the English and the German movement. Wickliffe did not go so far in his advance upon his time as the Bohemian martyr. He carefully avoided any such steps as those which brought Huss

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to the scaffold, and which, as their later consequence, plunged a large portion of Germany into a terrible war, that was attended with awful cruelty and suffering, and cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of men. In return for Wickliffe's moderation, his spiritual masters did not show themselves so intensely fanatical as did the heads of the Continental clergy. They were probably swayed by the prudent consideration lest so fanatical a persecution should only tend to fan a hitherto unimportant spark into a devouring flame. But Wickliffe, to whom it was granted to die in his bed, did not stand alone in England as regards his heretical views on religious points, and especially as to the corruption of the clergy. Indignation against the worldliness of that class, against the enormous treasures they had amassed, in such disproportion to the national property as to create much scandal, and which were employed for everything else than Church purposes, was very widely spread among the people. Thus it happened that when Henry VIII. suppressed the monasteries, on grounds that can scarcely be called religious, and began to lay hands on this enormous wealth for the uses of the crown, a very large part of his subjects looked on contentedly, although the proceeding involved great violence, and although a considerable portion of the treasure remained in the hands of those who were charged with the execution of the mandate. It is evident, from various sources, that the majority of the English people, even before the violent separation from the Romish Church which was effected by Henry VIII., was far from feeling any great reverence for the Catholic clergy or from being inspired by any fanatical dependence upon the Romish Church. In Germany the Reformation sprang forth from the deep soul of a man who had fought many battles with himself before he arrived at the clear perception of the goal at which he aimed; and even later on, when the princes of the land began to take part in the reforming current, and many worldly and political causes and interests became mixed up

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with it, it cannot be denied that the movement took a strong hold of the deepest intellectual sentiments of the German people. This was not possible in England, on account of the manner in which the Reformation was brought about, owing to the violent measures enacted by a tyrannical king. In after times certainly one branch of the reforming movement, in dependence upon the more advanced reformer Calvin, under the name of Puritanism, went much further in religious fanaticism than any other sect which had arisen during the Reformation. But, at the beginning, the great mass of the people saw only the outer aspect of the matter, the humiliation and plunder of the clergy, and therefore took but a very small part in the dogmatic discussions. A report made by a Roman Legate to the Pope contains the statement that "a very small portion of the English people are faithful Catholics; the greater number, so far from being led away by the deceptions of the new teaching, are so indifferent in matters of religion, that they are ready to follow every hint from above, and to declare themselves either Catholic or Protestant at the bidding of the Government." This indifferent attitude of the people could be nothing but an advantage to a poet like Shakespeare. His religious point of view, so free, so wonderfully independent of any passionate or fanatical leaning to one or the other side, could not have developed itself either in a society filled with the strong reforming spirit of the time, or in one in which the minds both of governors and of governed were ruled by a fanatical devotion to the older forms of faith. He found a congenial soil in the stirring conditions of a period full of movement in every realm of life, marching forward with mighty strides upon many new and venturous paths, among which, however, precisely the question of religion had remained on the surface, failing as yet to strike deep root into the passions of the people, or to have acquired sufficient strength to stir or shake their depths. A further circumstance, which powerfully influenced the æsthetic development of Shakespeare, as well

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as the whole poetic and artistic movement of the England of his time, was the attitude taken by the great English nobles towards literature and art, and consequently towards authors and artists personally, which differed, greatly to their advantage, from that taken by the aristocracy towards such persons and such movements in every other country. The attentive foreign observer is astonished, even to this day, when listening to the debates of the English Parliament, and especially those of the Upper House, and comparing them with those of other lands, to note how intimate is the acquaintance with the classics, proved by the frequency of references and quotations heard in these assemblies. How intimate and profound a knowledge of antiquity, its history, its relations to literature and culture, its historians, philosophers, and poets, does not this familiarity prove! Homer, Horace, Livy, Tacitus, the Greek tragedians, are oftener cited there than in any other political assembly; oftener, indeed, than their own poets and historians are quoted in the assemblies of other countries. The education of the English aristocracy is based even now to a much greater extent than in other countries upon the Humanistic classic culture. The reading of Greek and Latin authors and poets is pursued at the great English schools and colleges with zeal and scholarly profundity, exerting an important influence on the intellectual development of the pupils, which lasts throughout their lives. Another distinction, quite as great, and in those times even more striking, is presented by the English nobility when compared with the aristocracy of the Continental monarchies. While these latter, when they did not find in war a better occupation for their talents, threw away their time in the brilliant futilities of courts, and in seeking the favour of the crown, or in hunting, gambling, and pleasures of all kinds, the English nobility interested themselves with intelligent enjoyment in higher mental occupations. They generously protected young men of genius in all branches of literary activity, and under their powerful patronage literature and

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poetry were able to make mighty strides. Members of the highest aristocracy stood in relations of the most intimate friendship with distinguished writers and poets, who thus, while laying the foundation of the intellectual fame of their fatherland, at the same time immortalised the names of these noble-minded protectors, who so effectually furthered the intellectual progress of their country. The celebrated cycle of Shakespeare's Sonnets is addressed in large part to such a noble friend and protector, and has raised a brilliant and durable monument to this intellectual tendency on the part of the English aristocracy. In the whole of the world's history, poetry and the drama have hardly ever found so generous, so sympathetic, and hearty a support as they received from the English nobility at this time. Thus we behold Shakespeare in circumstances which furthered the very highest development of that poetic genius which merited and received the admiration of the whole globe. This genius sprang forth from a people and a period that enjoyed a full, rich, and active life, a people whose exertions in every domain were in the highest degree living and alert, that had appropriated to itself those moving forces of the age that had influenced the whole of Europe, without being convulsed to its depths by religious quarrels, which might have torn and devastated its land, as was the case in other countries. He arose, in fact, from out a people who loved their fair fatherland with ardent yet intelligent devotion, who had performed the most heroic actions to protect her from the foreign enemies who threatened her freedom, nay, her very existence; who strove to raise her to the noblest heights of fame. He was the true son of this most important epoch, and of this striving people, who were ever straining to advance. In his immortal poems, he has portrayed the highly coloured and diversified life that surged around him, in which, beside great deeds, there reigned the whole spontaneous joy of living which has animated the English people from all times.

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THE ENGLISH STAGE BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

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CHAPTER II

THE ENGLISH STAGE BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

AMONG all cultivated peoples who have created a drama, this has been the offspring of the outward forms of religious worship. The Romans do not fall into this category, for their drama was not of independent origin, and did not grow up from out of their own soil, being simply a copy of Greek originals. Among the Greeks, the root of dramatic poetry is found in the hymns of praise sung by the priests at the feasts of Dionysus (Bacchus). From the narration of the fate and deeds of the gods recited in these songs there expanded the desire to portray these mythical events in dialogue. To these were added in time the histories of other gods and heroes, and thus gradually from this modest germ sprang the full splendour of Greek tragedy. In like manner Greek comedy arose from the gradual expansion of the jokes and burlesques that were common, especially in the country districts, to the festival of the god of wine and of Bacchanalian merriment. In kindred fashion, too, the drama of the Middle Ages arose, and was developed. It was even at first carefully protected and furthered by the Church and her servants. Those very persons who, in later times, protested so vehemently against the drama as a work of Satan, may be regarded as the first theatre managers.

The Roman Church, which has the special gift to use with subtle skill everything that can arouse the imagination of the mass and foster their delight in outward show, in order

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to lead them thus into the house of worship, made use also of this lever to attract and enchain the fancy and attention of the people. At the great Church feasts consecrated to the commemoration of certain events in the life of the Saviour, such as His birth, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the event celebrated was represented dramatically either in the church itself or in a building near by, erected for the purpose. These representations were called Mysteries, and powerfully attracted the people. Hence under this stimulus there arose at about the same epoch in Germany, France, and England a religious drama intimately connected with the services and chief feasts of the Catholic ecclesiastical year. Of course these early germs of the newer dramatic art were of a most modest character. As may be expected, they were devoid of artistic shape, and, in spite of their dialogue, from their long-drawn, wearisome style of exposition, were more epic than dramatic in their nature. Gradually, however, as far as externals were concerned, they became exceedingly splendid. Many hundreds of people took part in them, the costumes were gorgeous and costly, while the simple booth, originally erected for the show, developed into a grand three-storied mystery stage, of which the lower part represented Hell, the middle Earth, and the upper Heaven. The spectators' nerves must have been stronger and more enduring than those of our modern theatrical public, if they could bear to sit out, day after day, the performance of such a mystery, which had no less than 174 acts. Though the subjects dealt with in these mysteries were so serious, treating of themes which are the most holy to a Christian, viz., the Life and Passion of the Redeemer, they were interspersed notwithstanding at an early period with comical elements. Farcical *intermezzi* were added. The Devil appeared constantly, especially under the mask of a jolly fellow, and even the holiest of all personages, Christ himself, was obliged to take part in comic scenes—as, for example, He was made by His Mother to recite the Lord's

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Prayer. This comic element was of course quite harmless, despite its license, since these theatrical performances still remained under the control and guidance of the Church. So long as they continued a part of the mystery, they contained nothing of a satirical character, and in no wise made light of the serious subjects of the main drama. In the course of time, however, they freed themselves from the mystery and became independent. They were then performed as an after-play, and acted by a different set of actors, thus coming to stand in the same relation to the mystery as the satyr-plays of the Greek stage stood to the great tragic Trilogies. Side by side with these mysteries and their grave and merry components we find certain other dramatic representations, called Moralities, allegorical plays, in which, in lieu of real personages, abstractions appeared as actors, personified virtues and vices, spiritual conditions and passions. For instance, Peace, Fraud, Idleness, Love, Hatred, and Anger would appear on the boards. However uncouth and wanting in artistic merit may have been these various pieces, which one hardly ventures to call plays, they must be considered as the starting-point of the modern drama. There lies hidden in them the germ of the popular drama, which only needed intelligent and fostering care to grow rich, fruitful, and independent. But every country did not furnish this fostering care. In France, the development of a truly national and popular drama, which might have been possible on these foundations, was hindered by the admixture of a foreign element, that of the antique classic form. These art rules, which had, moreover, been misunderstood, were supposed to have been derived from Aristotle. Further, the court had obtained a great influence over the national drama, and hence the French dramatic art was pushed to high artistic perfection, but took no root in the life of the people. It was not set free from the fetters until after many centuries, and after long and fierce conflicts. In Spain the drama attained a completely national and popular

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development. But however great and admirable are the mighty men who were the authors of this movement—Calderon, Lope de Vega, and others—still the greater number of the Spanish plays, despite their glow of colour, their beauty of language, their splendour of versification, which stamp them as poetic masterpieces, are shocking and unpleasant, owing to the dark spirit of religious fanaticism and the undignified servility to kingly authority which they manifest. In England, on the contrary, the admixture of the classical anti-national element, which became so absolute in France, was not able to prevail, although a so-called Classical School had tried to obtain recognition, and even seemed for a short time to have succeeded. But the strong, healthy spirit of freedom and independence which made itself felt in all things in England was equally evinced in the realms of dramatic poetry. Hence it was possible for the great minds which culminated in Shakespeare to plan that noble tree of a truly popular dramatic literature, which became the expression of a strong, healthy, high-coloured and stirring popular life. What especially concerns the direction of this development is the fact that already in the middle of the thirteenth century the so-called Miracle Plays, such as had been produced in France, had been introduced into England, with their serious representations and their farces. These Miracles Plays were of a much simpler character than the Mysteries and Moralities which developed from them, and which were also imitated in England. The frightful Civil War of the Red and White Roses, bringing about a great decline in the civilisation of the people, as Shakespeare described so vividly in several of the scenes of *Henry VI.*,* naturally put a stop to the development

* *Henry VI.*, Part iii. act ii. scene 5. To show to what a pitch of barbarity these wars had brought the people of England, Shakespeare makes use of a sort of symbolism. He introduces first a son who has killed his father, whose corpse he carries in his arms, and then a father who carries the corpse of his son whom he has slain.

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of dramatic poetry, which cannot exist under such circumstances, even if its highest flower can blossom in exciting, nay, even agitated, times. Indeed, no art can flourish under such conditions. When the country was once more quiet and had obtained an ordered dynastic succession, dramatic development continued its progress. Henry VIII. held a very brilliant court, at which theatrical amusements and masques played a prominent part. Of these masked plays Shakespeare has given us some idea in his *Henry VIII.* (act i. scene 4). But here arose the possible danger, that dramatic poetry might take the same direction as in France, allowing itself to be led astray by foreign models and become artificial, and thus take no root in the heart of the people, but remain a diversion only of the learned classes. The plays which served to divert the king and court were drawn from antique classical sources; Greek mythology furnished the material and the personages for the allegorical representations which were never wanting at any of the royal fêtes. Some idea of the nature of these shows may be obtained from the description given by Walter Scott of the fêtes at Kenilworth instituted by the Duke of Leicester in honour of Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of her visit to his castle. At the same time an attempt was made to produce an academically correct stage literature on classic models, dealing with serious and comic subjects, like that which bears the stamp of Louis XIV.'s reign. Plays modelled on Plautus, Terence, Euripides, nay, even on the tedious, stiff, and dull Roman tragedy-maker Seneca, were frequently produced in the reigns both of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. The attempts made to replace the natural development of the English popular stage by a courtly, learned, and artistic drama were carried to an even wider extent than later on in France. There, after all, it was only antique, foreign, or oriental materials that were forced to take antique classical shape. In England, Sackville in his tragedy, *Ferrex and Porrex*, also called *Gordebuc*, strove to

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clothe a native material with this foreign and scholarly artistic garb. But the English people detected the danger and resisted this foreign influence, to which the French succumbed, with the same energy with which they drove back the Spanish Armada and its attempts upon their civil and religious liberty—with the same strength with which in later times they resisted the attempts of their own kings to destroy their time-honoured freedom and to erect an absolute monarchy upon its ruins.

The cultivated classes admired the learning and brilliant rhetoric of these academical dramas based upon the three unities, but they turned with all the greater delight to the popular productions less intellectually related to their minds. These, however, it must not be denied, had gained something from the classical drama, and although there was no question of observing the unities, yet they had attained to a better totality and coherence by a certain manner of imitation. After the drama had loosened its connection with the Church, Scriptural subjects were naturally abandoned. They were replaced by historical material drawn from ancient and modern times, treated with a boundless *naïveté* and with inconceivable anachronisms, from which Shakespeare himself was not free. These were accepted very quietly by the people. Still, even in the plays in which time and place are disregarded most mercilessly, plays in which the poet brings together persons and events belonging to different centuries, in which he presents an entirely impossible geography, he always remains true when dealing with man, his passions, his virtues, and his vices. In the same way, in the pieces we have mentioned, there is to be commended, on the whole, the delineation of character, which remains tolerably true to nature, although we find not a shadow of that incomparably fine and masterly psychological analysis that distinguishes Shakespeare. What particularly marked English dramatic poetry before Shakespeare is its delight in horrors, in monstrosities, in massing

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deeds of shame and blood, the tendency to utilise the terrible to an unendurable degree. We shall see, when we come to examine the plays of Shakespeare's first period, that he has also erred in this direction. At all events, it is plain that the audiences had stronger nerves than we can boast of, and that these things, which repel us, must have given them real pleasure. For if the authors had not been aware that what they offered in their plays was likely to hit the taste of the spectators, upon whom they depended for success, they would certainly have changed the character of their work. The English had just passed through a hard school. The horrors of civil war, the repeated executions of prominent men, who shortly before stood at the head of the state under the short reign of Edward VI., the bloody tragedies which Henry VIII. enacted before his subjects in his numerous executions of distinguished men of all ranks and classes, and of delicate women, among whom were the Queens, these and many other such experiences had hardened the people and made them callous to the terrible tragedies brought by the poets of their day upon the stage. The London populace was accustomed, almost daily, to assist at executions, often at frightful martyrdoms, and owing to this habit they bore quietly such a tragedy as that of *Titus Andronicus*, attributed to Shakespeare. In this play, out of the fifteen personages, six are stabbed, two beheaded, two have their throats cut, one is hacked to pieces and burnt, one buried alive and left to perish of hunger. And the greater part of these horrors are not simply related, but were absolutely represented on the stage before the very eyes of the people. Besides this, Titus Andronicus has one hand cut off, his daughter Lavinia loses both, she is also ravished and her tongue is torn out, after which with her bloody arm-stumps she holds the vessel into which is poured the blood of the author of this crime, slain in revenge by her father. The language of these plays also was exaggerated and inflated, in accordance with the action.

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Shakespeare has furnished a caricature of this bombastic talk, carried to its highest point of ridiculous pathos, in the speeches he puts into the mouth of Pistol in *Henry IV.* Another important characteristic of the English stage before Shakespeare, which also exerted an easily recognised influence over him, was that species of national humour which had found its way to the stage from the minds of the people, scourging without limits, though harmlessly and good-naturedly, whatever in the circumstances or the personages of the day seemed to lend itself to ridicule or satire. A favourite figure on the English stage that appeared in tragedy and comedy was Vice clothed in the garments of a fool. In his mouth was placed such satire of a rough comic form, which freely spattered the different classes and trades represented in the plays, if they gave, or only seemed to give, occasion for such mockery. Favourite butts were the physicians, lawyers, the avaricious, and so on. It is manifest that one of the peculiarities for which Shakespeare has often been blamed, namely, his tendency to mix deep tragedy and broad farce in the same play, had its root in this popular fashion of his forerunners. Certainly this Vice and other farcical figures, permitted to appear in the midst of horror-laden tragedies, was the source of the comic character in Shakespeare's plays. As to Comedy properly so called, which grew out of the quips and cranks of the court-fools, and specially those of the famous Tarlton, whom both high and low dreaded because of his tongue, the first regular piece of this nature was *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1566). It is worthy of note that this first English comedy was composed by a high ecclesiastic, the Bishop of Bath.

However much English acting had improved, those who practised it as a profession had to struggle for a long time with great obstacles. Although their efforts responded to a marked tendency in the people, and though in following their trade they earned very substantial gains, still they were not deemed worthy to hold civic rights—nay, they were

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looked upon as vagabonds, when they were not honoured by the Queen with the title of "Her Majesty's Servants," and as such officially entitled to form a troop of actors. Of such companies there were thirteen at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Queen herself, who was exceedingly fond of theatrical entertainments, maintained four such troops: the boys of St. Paul's, the boys of Westminster, those of the Chapel, and those of Windsor. On certain feast-days she also hired other troops to play before her. In all such cases these extra representations were given late in the evening, that the actors might not be hindered in their ordinary occupation, which was the giving of public afternoon performances.

The Earl of Leicester's company obtained from the Queen, through his intercession, the privilege of giving representations in the whole of England, with the exception of the City of London. The London municipality, partly from a fanatical enmity to the theatre—which they considered as a hotbed of wickedness and vice, the work of the devil himself—partly from just displeasure at certain outrageous proceedings provoked by misdemeanours on the part of the players, strove in every way to check the development of the stage. But the very edicts launched against the theatres with intent to suppress them served only to set this now indispensable form of popular amusement upon firmer foundations. In consequence of an edict from the municipality forbidding to the players the further use of the great city taverns, which had been the chief scenes of their activity, the troops found themselves compelled to set up permanent places for their performances. Thus were founded the first playhouses in England, Blackfriars, where Burbadge, afterwards Shakespeare's friend and companion, at that time the head of the Earl of Leicester's company of players, established himself, and the Theatre and the Curtain in Shoreditch. The number of theatres soon increased, despite the ill-will and open opposition of the Puritans, so

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that already in the reign of James there were seventeen in London alone. The profession of an actor was so lucrative, that those who, through the excellence of their performance, had won fame, and consequent fortune, used to retire after a certain period of activity, and establish themselves in an easy and comfortable existence. The stage of those days was most simple, as far removed from the splendour of artistic decorations to which we are accustomed on the modern boards, as from the magnificence of costume, decoration, and machinery employed at the court representations of their own day. In the most splendid summer-theatre of London, the Globe, opened by Shakespeare and Burbadge in 1595, the pit was a kind of open court, without any shelter from the weather. Around this space were several rows of covered boxes; the stage, with its dressing-rooms behind, was also covered. The curtain was not drawn up, as at present, but opened in the middle. Painted scenes, houses, mountains, cities, were left to the court plays, where they had been in use since 1568. Generally a blackboard with a name painted on it designated the place of action. For tragedies, the stage was hung with black, for festive subjects the rushes, which usually strewed the boards, were replaced by carpets. A sort of scaffolding in the background of the stage, covered in front by a separate curtain, served as tower, wall, balcony, or theatre according to requirement. Inside were played the *intermezzi*, such as that in *Hamlet*. Here stood the bed of Desdemona; above was the balcony on which Romeo and Juliet forgot the nightingale and the lark; beneath was the vault where they were at last united; there, too, were hurried such unfortunates as incurred the wrath of the authors during the performances. Sir Philip Sidney says in his *Apology for Poetry*: "In most of the pieces there is Asia on one side and Africa on the other, and so many smaller kingdoms added to these, that the actor's first task is to state where he finds himself. Then come three women and gather

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flowers, that means that the stage is a garden. Directly after this we hear of a shipwreck on the same spot. We are to be blamed if we do not know that it is also a rock in the midst of the sea. There appears on it a monster breathing forth smoke and flames, then the spectators must understand that it is a cave. In the meantime two armies rush upon it, represented by four swords and shields, and who is so ignorant as not to see that the place is a battlefield?" It is evident that the simplicity of the stage, which he had inherited from his forerunners, had a distinct influence upon the action and technique of Shakespeare's plays. If he had been writing for spectators who, like those of our day, expect to see all the places and things which appear in the play accurately represented, he would scarcely have changed the scene of his action so often or so arbitrarily. We modern spectators of Shakespeare's plays are obliged, when we insist upon the actual and accurate representation of the scene of action, to submit to being snatched from out of the pleasant impressions produced by his poetry, by the constant fall of the act-drop. This is rendered necessary by the unavoidable time and trouble needed for the changes of scene.* Now, as all these changes of scene were replaced, on Shakespeare's stage, by the hanging up of a blackboard with a name painted on it, and as he had besides the advantage of play-

* An experiment has been tried at the Court Theatre in Munich, which, with the exception of some inconveniences which may perhaps be remedied, has not proved without success. This consisted in the so-called newly-arranged stage, prepared with the intention of avoiding the continual dropping of the curtain, by changing the scene on the open stage. Certainly this result was obtained, that these great creations of genius held their mighty march before us without interruption, and an incomparably deeper impression was produced than is possible with the old arrangement. But let no one imagine that by this new arrangement we have returned to the simplicity of the Shakespearian stage. It is as if a generation accustomed to railways should return to the posting system. Such a revolution is not even contemplated in the new arrangement. This, despite all the simplicity of which it boasts, is a masterpiece of stage technique, having the same relation to the Shakespearian stage that the costly arrangements of a court-theatre of the first rank have to-day to the shifts by which a strolling company may manage to perform in a tavern or in a barn.

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ing before a public quite contented with this arrangement, and quite capable of supplying by their imagination all that was wanting, he was not hindered from changing the scene of action several times in one act, and often for very short moments, or from demanding all manner of things for his stage, that he knew his public would supply from their own fancy. He himself describes, with delicious humour, in the Prologue to *Henry V.*, this inequality of the means at his command to the great ends required of them, and expresses his conviction that his public will supply his shortcomings from the treasures of their imagination.

Enter Chorus.

But pardon, gentles all,
The flat unraisèd spirits that have dared
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object; can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
O, pardon! since a crooked figure may
Attest in little place a million;
And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
Whose high upreared and abutting fronts
The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder:
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance:
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there; jumping o'er times,
Turning the accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass.—*Henry V.*, Prologue.

Kreysig, a German commentator, adds to these lines of Shakespeare's the following apposite remark: "Wherever the sympathising spectator capable of enjoyment is want-

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ing, all the efforts of machinists and stage decorators are vain. It is impossible that our theatres could or should ever return to the original simplicity of those circumstances. The *naïveté* of this point of view, once lost, could never be regained. But on this account we must not underrate the advantages the poet derived from this unassuming attitude on the part of his audience. The abandonment of all that deception of the senses in which our modern stage rivals that of the days of imperial Rome, gave him an invaluable independence of secondary considerations. It imposed on him the need to capture the heart and intellect of his public, since his plays could not appeal to their pleasure in brilliant stage effects. Neither actors nor spectators were constantly distracted by secondary matters. It could not happen that a fine scene would be ruined by a tottering flat or a curtain that would not come down."

It would have been a bad look-out for the English stage of that day if histrionic art had stood on as low a step as its outward surroundings, because what was left to be desired in external splendour had to be made up in the superiority and solidity of its dramatic performances. But apparently this was not the case. It rather seems as if the actor's art had reached a very high degree of perfection. From the character of Shakespeare's plays and their demands on the performers, it is manifest that a poet would scarcely have created them unless he were sure of finding artists who would be able to represent them adequately. The only thing which shakes our confidence in this idea is the fact that the female characters were not performed by women, but by boys. An Ophelia, Miranda, Cordelia, still more a Hermione, a Lady Macbeth, played by a boy, is from our point of view exceedingly strange. This, however, appears to have been remedied by the very careful teaching bestowed on the youths chosen to perform the female parts. If any doubt on the point remains, it must perforce disappear when we study the scene in which Hamlet instructs the

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actors as to the proper way in which to regard their art. These golden words put by the poet into the mouth of the cultivated Prince, to show the actors their right way, and to warn them against mistakes, are words which every artist on the boards to-day, who really takes his art seriously, should keep in his memory as a costly treasure, following them implicitly. "Speak the speech, I pray you," he says, "as I pronounce it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus: but use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. Oh, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious perriwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings; who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb show and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for out-doing Termagant; it out-herods Herod. Pray you, avoid it. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor; suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of Nature, for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature, to show Virtue her own feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now, this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. Oh! there be players, that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly—not to speak it profanely—that neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, Pagan, or man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had

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made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them; for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the meantime, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it."

These words should be engraved in golden letters over the door of every playhouse. Where the theory of acting appeared to be so well understood, it is impossible that the execution should not have been carried to a high point of perfection. We saw above, that although the antique drama influenced to an important extent the form and development of the English drama, this influence never went so far as to flood the popular stage with the learned and classical plays enacted at court, in which the antique form, with its chorus and unities of time and place, predominated. The comic pieces, too, which were ostensibly imitations of Terence, the best of the two Roman comic writers, had absorbed but little of his refinement, and conformed far more to the tone of the Old English folk-humour. In the before-named tragedy, *Ferrex and Porrex*, the antique manner was indeed preserved, the greater part of the action not taking place on the stage, but out of sight, being only narrated to the spectators, while each act closed with a choral song. But the unities of time and place, which were indispensable adjuncts of the antique dramatic form, were not observed. Other peculiarities, too, especially the allegorical representations with which each act opened, and the abundance of proverbial expressions, prove that these shows were strongly influenced by the above-described moralities. We certainly find a number of plays which treat of classical or mythological subjects, but they show no trace of the antique spirit or the antique form. The tragedy of *Cambyses*, by Preston, is very rough in structure. It is to this play

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that Falstaff refers in *Henry IV.* (Part I. act ii. scene 4), when he says that he would play the rôle of the king *in Cambyses' vein.* Among the writers of this school Richard Edward (1523–1566) was highly esteemed by his contemporaries. He wrote a play after the Horatian rule entitled *Damon and Pythias*, which he called a tragical comedy; but this drama does not deserve to be connected with the name of the refined elegant Roman poet. In the comic parts intermingled with the serious scenes are found the very lowest forms of farce, drunken scenes, fights, practical jokes; and a favourite personage in English popular comedy, the charcoal-burner, Grim of Croydon, figures in the principal parts. In the last decade but one of the sixteenth century, John Lilly (born in 1533) was the most prominent personage. He furnished the court stage with plays in which he strove to establish a more refined style of comedy. These were performed by the boys of the Royal Chapel. They are of unequal merit, but they all attempt to mingle the classical with the English popular element: a hopeless task, since both stand side by side, and by no means melt into one another. In the comedy of *Mother Bombie*, the subject-matter is taken from an English popular poem, but in form it approaches more nearly to its Roman model, the comic poet Terence. *Galatea* is a pastoral in which the fable and the names of the personages are Greek, but which is played on English ground, and in which both astrology and alchemy are satirised. *Endymion* contains an adaptation of the Greek fable of the love of the goddess Diana for the beautiful youth Endymion—a flattering homage to Queen Elizabeth, as well as a tolerably accurate imitation of the boastful Bramarbas in the "Miles Gloriosus" of the comedy of the Roman Plautus. The characters are in curious and absolute contradiction to the style, which recalls some of the conceits of the modern Italian *concettisti.* In *King Midas*, the well-known fable of the king who turned everything to gold is apparently used by the poet as

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the vehicle for a satire upon Philip II. of Spain, the owner of the gold countries of America. *Alexander and Campaspe* contains a number of anecdotes and witticisms related by King Alexander and the cynic Diogenes, who tell them in clear and comprehensible language.

George Whetstone, who wrote in 1578 the comedy of *Promos and Cassandra*, from which Shakespeare took the material for his *Measure for Measure*, would also fain be considered as a pupil and imitator of the antique drama. But though he had the desire, he had not the requisite capacity. It is almost comic to hear him, the author of plays which stretch over the insupportable length of ten acts, complaining of the rough presentment and the improbable action of the English drama. We see that even men of undoubted talent, who had followed the manner and learnt in the school of the ancients, were powerless against the English popular spirit, that held fast to the outward aspect and the literary form of its own drama.

A group of noble poets, who had a large school of imitators, succeeded in reconstructing lyrics and epics after well-known antique models, and they therefore fancied they had the power to impose these models upon the English popular drama, which seemed to them so rough and uncouth. To serve this end Sir Philip Sidney's *Art of Poetry* was written. In this work the English romantic drama is severely criticised in sharp satirical fashion, as one in which a wilderness of different actions struggle for position without an atom of artistic grouping or co-ordination. The writer shows how a drama should be ordered according to the antique form, where a single complete action is brought smoothly to a tragic catastrophe. This treatise induced Samuel Daniel to indite his strictly correct tragedy of *Cleopatra and Philotas*, and also gave rise to several other dramas of the same nature, as well as to translations of some French classical plays. But it was in vain. English taste could not adapt itself to this leaning towards the

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classical. The Italian epic poems, the romances of chivalry, the native English ballads, the tales and legends of the Middle Ages, occupied the whole domain of dramatic material, so that there was no room for the classics. The romantic dramas, built up on these lines, were able to confront successfully those constructed on classic foundations. They pleased the taste of the multitude by the very characteristics which offended the friends of the classical dramas, namely, the over-abundance of fantastic adventures, and the boldness with which they ignored time and space in leading their heroes into all manner of different countries, often causing the action to comprise more than one generation. Sidney, in the work mentioned above, reproves them for this. He says, "It is quite customary in these pieces for two noble young people to fall in love, for the princess to bear a beautiful child, which gets lost, grows up, falls in love on its own account, bears a child in its turn, and all this in the space of two hours." These lapses from good taste, he continues, have been given up in Italy by even the most vulgar players. Shakespeare's *Pericles* may be considered as a specimen drama of this adventurous species. But it was just owing to these very lapses from good taste, bitterly as they are censured by the partisans of the classic rules, that England owes the fact that her dramatic poetry was able to reach a height which culminated in Shakespeare. It was no doubt with the clearest consciousness of what he was doing that he chose his path between the two. He was cognisant of all the attempts which had been made to turn the English stage in a classic direction, but he did not take part in them. He made use of Plautus in the *Comedy of Errors*, imitated Seneca in the apparition of the gods at the close of *Cymbeline*, made use of Plutarch for his Roman tragedies, parodied Homer in *Troilus and Cressida*, and evinced a wonderful familiarity and a profound comprehension of Roman things and characters, as well as those of Homeric heroes, although he knew all these

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writers by translation only. He drew his material from Italian "*Novelle*," from English Chronicles; he despised no material that he could utilise, no matter whence its source, but he freed himself from all rule in the handling of his material, and often excused himself in his prologues for the liberties he took. In this connection the words are most important that, in the *Winter's Tale*, are placed in the mouth of Time at the beginning of the fourth act, at the point where the prolongation of the action through two generations corresponds to the legendary character of its title:

> I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror,
> Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
> Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
> To use my wings. Impute it not a crime
> To me or my swift passage that I slide
> O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
> Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
> To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour
> To plant and o'erwhelm custom. Let me pass
> The same I am, ere ancient'st order was
> Or what is now received: I witness to
> The times that brought them in; so shall I do
> To the freshest things now reigning, and make stale
> The glistering of this present, as my tale
> Now seems to it. Your patience this allowing,
> I turn my glass and give my scene such growing
> As you had slept between.—*Winter's Tale*, act iv. scene i.

Hence we perceive that Shakespeare avoided compulsory rules with perfect consciousness of what he was doing.

If we wished to describe the aims of the more conspicuous poets from 1560 to the advent of Shakespeare—that is to say, those who did not yield to the tendency to impose severely classic rules upon the English stage—we should say that they held by the old English comedy, but at the same time tried, through the influence of the antique, to free themselves from the confusion and formlessness of the romantic plays, opposing to them their more definite and better constructed tragedies, and thus bringing about a new period of dramatic art in England. For the most part

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they are bloody tragedies. Christopher Marlowe's *Tamerlane* furnishes a landmark amid this group, distinguished from each other by two distinctly different tendencies. The plays preceding in date Marlowe's epoch-making play are nearer to classical models. They consist of more narrative and dialogues than action visible to the spectator, the latter being carried on out of sight, as in the antique drama, behind the scenes. Those plays, however, which follow *Tamerlane* are pervaded by the influence of this tragedy, which just at the time of Shakespeare's arrival in London had produced an immense revolutionary effect upon the English stage. Certain events were still fresh in the memory of the public, under whose influence the mighty heroic theme of the play, set forth in splendid and appropriate language, could not fail to exert a great effect. In 1586 Londoners had witnessed the beheading, after frightful tortures, of the malefactors, Thomas Babington and his accomplices, conspirators against the life of Queen Elizabeth. In 1587 they beheld the execution of a delicate woman, once a mighty queen, Mary Stuart. In 1588 the wrecks of the mighty Armada Spain had sent out to crush the liberties of England strewed the sea amid the general jubilation. All these great catastrophes had prepared the susceptibilities of the people to enjoy to a high degree their likeness in the exciting action that passed before them in Marlowe's plays, and assured for these dramas an immense effect; on which account a great number of plays written in the same spirit appeared soon after. The *Spanish Tragedy*, by Kyd, which for reality and popularity fell little below Marlowe's work; the *Battle of Alcazar*, by Steele; the *Mad Roland*, by Greene, and many others, belong to this group, which resembled very closely Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. Gervinus rightly draws attention to the relationship of these plays to the tragedies of the Schleswig School in German literature. They have in common the pompous rhetoric, the powerful pathos of language, which

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exceeds measure as equally as do the passions of the personages who express themselves. Revenge for blood that has been shed is equivalent for crimes that have been committed is their fundamental idea. It is interesting to observe how two of these works, the *Spanish Tragedy* by Kyd, and its continuation by another hand, called *Jeronymo*, influenced Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, an influence shown in certain coincidences which cannot be the result of chance. The *Spanish Tragedy* opens with a scene in which appears a certain Andrea, who has been murdered, in company with Revenge, who plays the part of chorus. A certain Balthasar committed the murder, for which he is pursued by the vengeance of Andrea's sweetheart. This same person also murders the second lover of the girl, Horatio; therefore he is pursued by the vengeance of Jeronymo, the father of his last victim. To him appears the ghost of his murdered son, and calls upon him to avenge him on his murderer, for which end Jeronymo feigns madness.

At last, by means of a theatrical performance, he is able to satisfy his vengeance. In the same way all the horrors which appear in *Titus Andronicus* spring from the passion of revenge. It seems incredible that the bloody horrors of this tragedy could be surpassed, but yet they were. Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, which appeared in 1590, contains some that are still more awful. The cruelly treated Jew invents, for the satisfaction of his burning hatred against his Christian tormentors, the most inconceivable and outrageous acts of revenge, so terrible as to surpass anything ever yet produced in this line in dramatic poetry.

I would like to examine a little more closely at least one of the works of that poet who influenced the English public before Shakespeare and prepared the way for his advent. For this purpose I have chosen Marlowe's *Faust*, interesting because of its resemblance to that of Goethe, and

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also because this drama is distinguished from the larger number of the works of this group of poets in not treating of deeds of blood, nor is it filled with horrible and revengeful actions. Excepting some rough and farcical scenes, it is written in a dignified tone, worthy of its serious theme. It does not lose itself in bombastic pathos, but is occupied with a grave problem, with the efforts of man to win for himself knowledge in a realm that Superior Wisdom has eternally closed to him, and with the punishment which follows such effort. The tragedy of *Doctor Faustus*, as Marlowe calls his play, is manifestly the most important work of Shakespeare's most distinguished predecessor. Its material is drawn from the English translation of the oldest German Faust book, and follows closely this ancient literary monument of the German Faust legend. Of the Gretchen episode, Goethe's most individual creation, there is no trace. The contents are the monologue of Faust in his study, the poet with Mephistopheles, the brilliant career of Faust as a magician, leading him, as does Goethe, to the court of the Emperor, and his death under the claws of the Devil. Marlowe's Faust is constructed on large and fine lines, but the poet does not rise above some pathetic strains. The close imitation of the rough German chapbook, and still more a regard for public taste, betrayed him into several low farcical scenes, and above all, into a superficial conception of the Faust legend, whose real worth was not hidden from him, as is proved in more than one instance in his play. But he was writing for audiences hungry for action and strong theatrical effects. Rough jokes, like the transformation of a horse into a bundle of straw, and the devouring by Faust of a whole stack of hay, perhaps conduced more than aught else to the success of the piece. The work opens, like Goethe's, with a monologue in Faust's study, and this gives scope for an interesting comparison with Goethe's introduction. I give an extract from this scene, which is attractive also in Marlowe's hands:

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ACT I. Scene I.

(FAUSTUS *alone in his study.*)

Faust. Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin
To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess:
Having commenc'd, be a divine in shew,
Yet level at the end of every art,
And live and die in Aristotle's works.
Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravish'd me!
Bene disserere est finis logices.
Is, to dispute well, logic's chiefest end?
Affords this art no greater miracle?
Then read no more; thou hast attain'd that end:
A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit:
Bid Economy farewell, Galen come:
Seeing, *Ubi desinit philosophus, ibi incipit medicus:*
Be a physician, Faustus; heap up gold,
And be etèrniz'd for some wondrous cure.
Summum bonum medicinæ sanitas,
The end of physic is our body's health.
Why, Faustus, hast thou not attain'd that end?
Is not thy common talk sound aphorisms?
Are not thy bills hung up as monuments,
Whereby whole cities have escap'd the plague,
And thousand desperate maladies been eas'd?
Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.
Could'st thou make men to live eternally,
Or, being dead, raise them to life again,
Then this profession were to be esteem'd.

Jurisprudence and Theology coming off no better than the rest, Faust turns to the fifth faculty, Magic:

These metaphysics of magicians,
And necromantic books are heavenly;
Lines, circles, scenes, letters, and characters;
Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.
O, what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
Is promis'd to the studious artisan!
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command: emperors and kings
Are but obeyèd in their several provinces,
Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds;

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But his dominion that exceeds in this,
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man;
A sound magician is a mighty god;
Here, Faustus, tire thy brains to gain a deity.

I must still find room for Faustus' last monologue, which in parts rises to a pitch of stately pathos:

(FAUSTUS *alone. The clock strikes eleven.*)

Faust. Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!
Stand still; you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come;
Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!
O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.
O, I'll leap up to my God!—who pulls me down?—
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop of blood would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ!—
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
Yet will I call on Him: O, spare me, Lucifer!—
Where is it now? 'tis gone: and see, where God
Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows!
Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!

. . . . . .

(*The clock strikes.*)

Ah, half the hour is past! 'twill all be passed anon.
O God,
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Impose some end to my incessant pain;
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd!
O, no end is limited to damnèd souls!
Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
Ah, Pythagoras! metempsychosis, were that true,
This soul should fly from me, and I be chang'd
Into some brutish beast.

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All beasts are happy, for when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements;
But mine must live still to be plagu'd in hell.
Curs'd be the parents that engender'd me!
No, Faustus, curse thyself, curse Lucifer
That hath depriv'd thee of the joys of Heaven.

(*The clock strikes twelve.*)

. . . . . .

Chorus. Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise,
Only to wonder at unlawful things,
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
To practise more than heavenly power permits.

This work of Marlowe's is a distinct advance upon his own bloody tragedies, and those of the men grouped round him. But these latter mark the temper and taste which Shakespeare found prevailing in London when he arrived there, and to which he himself paid tribute in *Titus Andronicus*, supposing that play to be really his. But Shakespeare is doubly divided from his forerunners by an impassable gulf. He has different intellectual and æsthetic qualities. Even if in the heyday of youth he may have overstepped bounds, still in his worst he was far from employing the confused action, the moral incoherence of the Marlowe-Greene group. From an æsthetic point of view, also, Shakespeare early in his career detached himself completely from their uncouth boorishness, and from the bombastic bathos of their language. Indeed, he has bitterly satirised and burlesqued this in the speeches of his bully and boaster Pistol. His early and complete severance from this school is easily established. We have to consider that his first independent works were not bloody tragedies, for *Titus Andronicus* stands alone (even if we concede its authorship to Shakespeare, which is doubtful), but comedies, and comedies too which not one of the Greene-Marlowe group could have approached for delicacy of conception and treatment. The distinction between Shakespeare and his fore-

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runners and contemporaries is not so abrupt in the historical plays as in the comedies and tragedies. Here they worked from common sources, the Chronicles; the materials were established facts of history. Hence they were not able to indulge in those monstrosities of passion and action to which they gave vent in their original pieces. Some of these historical plays are quite worthy of attention, and Shakespeare is brought into close relation with them through his *Henry VI.*, whose First Part contains only small portions due to his own hand, while the Second and Third Parts are only revisions, as it were, of older plays, due either to Greene or to Marlowe; but on this point literary critics are not agreed.

The most gifted of the younger poets who preceded Shakespeare died early in the bloom of their manhood and power soon after he began his poetical career, as though they had departed to make way for a greater than themselves. Even if they had lived, however, none of them would ever have been dangerous rivals. All the dramatic poetry of England before his seems like a dumb finger-post leading us towards an unknown goal, through paths full of tangled brushwood and romantic wilderness, that cause us to long for the natural beauty we cannot find. Shakespeare came as the path-finder, and led us to a pleasant satisfactory destination. He far surpassed each one of his predecessors. He recognised that he could only learn negatively from these poets—that is to say, that he could see from their work how things should not be done. Very early did he perceive this, and in his first independent work he took an entirely opposite direction. These first efforts far surpassed the masterpieces of his forerunners. Now, having shown the bases on which Shakespeare developed, let us proceed to our attempt at explaining him. But first we must try and give a sketch of his life.

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SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

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CHAPTER III

SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

IN endeavouring to summarise the events of Shakespeare's life, we perceive that the sources of information regarding this man, whose name will last as long as civilisation itself, run scant indeed. The meagre, and still more, the confused and uncertain nature of the information regarding his life, youth, marriage, and other important circumstances of his career, is so great that legend has been woven around him, as though we had to do with one who lived in a far distant epoch of grey antiquity. It is not easy to assign the reasons for so remarkable a fact. In our examination, however, we shall attempt to discover its probable origin. First of all, we must note the difference between the learned and literary activity of his time and that of our own. Certainly there existed relatively no fewer nor less able scholars than at the present day. On the contrary, at that epoch of intellectual activity and movement there lived a remarkably large number of great minds, who strove to attain the highest summits of knowledge, and who by means of their bold speculations, discoveries, and inventions, marked an epoch in history, and aided the progress and aroused the astonishment of the world. But these men only worked on a grand scale. There were wanting those less brilliant but equally useful scholars and collectors who pay attention to small things, and it is just these details, these personal touches, which are precisely of the greatest importance in establishing the career of an eminent man. There were

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then no literary journals, indeed no newspapers, and all the innumerable aids which to-day help in preserving such details were wanting. To this negative cause, which hinders us from discovering any secure basis for literary biographies, there was added in the case of Shakespeare a positive cause, that contributed to this same result. It was an agitated era, which brought forth daily something new and unexpected. Incomparably great interests were at stake, great political events followed each other in unbroken succession. Although, as we have seen, a lively interest was taken by the higher and more cultivated classes, and even to some extent by the masses, in poetry and literature, and especially in the theatre, still this interest formed but a fraction of that activity which absorbed the general attention. Taken as a whole, far less interest was felt in intellectual matters than at the present day. It is true that politics and other public concerns still absorb much attention, but the principle of division of labour is extended. The activity of those who devote themselves to public affairs is now so subdivided, that while politics, war, statesmanship, legislation, social questions, parliamentarism, and many other matters, largely absorb the attention of the world, still there are enough persons outside these circles sufficiently occupied with literature, to prevent in the future any such uncertainty concerning the life of a great author or poet as prevails about Shakespeare. Everything to-day is collected and noted down, so that we are in a position to follow the lives of our modern intellectual heroes from year to year, from day to day, even from hour to hour. There is, in fact, sometimes too much of this research into details. At that time this beelike industry was lacking; hence an absence of material of certain knowledge. Another circumstance which contributed to an important extent in hindering the careful preservation of biographical details concerning a dramatic poet like Shakespeare is the course taken by English history not long after his advent. The great struggle

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between the House of Stuart and Parliament, which ended, after a long and terrible civil war, in the complete victory of the latter, brought into absolute power a generation who, in their black and fiery religious fanaticism, damned as the work of the Devil all gay and worldly pleasures, all arts that adorn and soften life. The theatre was the special object of their wrath, and it was part of their system to crush it entirely. These gloomy Puritans allowed no literary activity to flourish, and thus it came about that in a relatively short time tradition concerning the life of the greatest English poet was completely wiped out. This gap could no longer be filled up when interest on the subject reawakened, and it was necessary to bridge it over, as best might be, with hypotheses, fancies, and inventions. Let us try, without allowing too much playground to these hypotheses, to sketch the life of our poet from the scanty materials left to us.

It is ascertained that Shakespeare's family already possessed property in Warwickshire at the fall of the usurper Richard III. It is said, that in the battle which caused his fall, an ancestor fought on the side of Richmond, the lawful heir, and that he received a title and coat of arms as reward for his services. This title does not, however appear to have been highly esteemed by the family, for we find the poet's father designated as plain John Shakespeare, a wool merchant, of Stratford-on-Avon. He was, however, a man of means, owning houses and land, and holding more than one honourable office in the town government. Through his marriage with Mary Arden he became connected with a noble and wealthy family. William Shakespeare, our poet, was born in Stratford, 1564, the eldest of eight children. The date of his birth cannot be fixed with absolute certainty; common consent puts it on April 23rd. He received his first instruction, and also learned Latin, in the free school of his birthplace. How far this classical education extended cannot be accurately settled. The anachronisms

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and historical and geographical absurdities found in his works have caused critics to suppose it was exceedingly slight. For example, he makes the Romans in *Coriolanus* march to the beating of drums; in *Julius Cæsar* he causes a clock to strike; in the *Winter's Tale* he gives a sea-coast to Bohemia; he names the celebrated Italian artist Giulio Romano as contemporary with the oracle of Delphi. Hence some have judged Shakespeare to have been an uneducated man. The objection that has been made to these strictures, viz., that he shows by various allusions no mean knowledge of ancient history and legend, that in his Roman plays he evinces familiarity with the Roman history at the most various periods, setting them forth with striking truth to life, may be met by the explanation that he learned all this from English translations of the classics, that it was thence he drew the material for his poems, and, uneducated as he was, was unable to recognise or to correct their errors. Now it may be true that Shakespeare was too little versed in classical studies to be able to read Livy and Plutarch in their own tongue, but the notion that he lacked education must be relegated to the realm of fable. We are certainly unacquainted with the details of his education. We do not know the direction taken by his training, whether it was orderly and systematic, or whether he obtained his knowledge by means of his own unaided exertions. But it has been said, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and it seems absolutely foolish to launch such a reproach against a man who certainly betrays in his poems an excellent knowledge of history, law, and other branches of learning, and who further makes such cogent and appropriate comments on the most diverse subjects. The extract from *Hamlet*, the directions to the players, of itself alone is sufficient to show that Shakespeare was not merely a great genius but a refined and highly educated man. We can no more deduce that Shakespeare's anachronisms were the result of ignorance than we could accuse Schiller of ignorance because he makes Butler,

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in *Wallenstein*, use a simile drawn from a lightning-conductor, which shows that he was apparently ignorant of the fact that such were unknown until Franklin discovered them in the eighteenth century. After all, Shakespeare's outrageous offences against geography, science, and history, occur in his fantastic and merry dramas, plays far removed from the soil of material reality. In other dramas, where his poetical requirements did not need such sacrifices, Shakespeare evinces most accurate acquaintance with the history and laws of his time and land, and, in innumerable cases, with the practical business of life. It is as difficult to form an accurate estimate of the truth or falsehood of the information we possess regarding the doctrine of the prosperity of the Shakespeare family, as it is to divine exactly what was the poet's intellectual training. Information exists to the effect that his father was no longer a member of the town council in 1579, and that he left behind him a very small taxable income, whence it has been inferred that he had sunk in social position. How far and in what degree this conclusion is correct cannot be certainly ascertained. Indeed, when we proceed to the account of Shakespeare's youth, we begin to enter a realm of uncertainty. Things are related which throw no favourable light upon the lad destined to become one of England's greatest men; and although some of his admirers, who cannot endure a spot on the fame of their hero, have striven to free him from these accusations, still it must be acknowledged that the boyhood of our poet was an irregular, and at times a wild one. Some believe the story of his poaching exploits to have been entirely an invention, but this can scarcely be. The tale which ran the country-side was that he had been tracked poaching in Sir Thomas Lucy's park, was caught, tried, and imprisoned, in return for which he avenged himself by nailing upon that gentleman's park gates and spreading abroad a bitter satire, spiced with allusions some of which outpassed the bounds of decency. Such tricks and irregularities as

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this, however, are after all not to be judged severely in a lively hot-blooded young man. Another event, however, which is also not absolutely clear in its details, is calculated to throw a darker shadow upon his fame. He married, in 1582, in his eighteenth year, Anne Hathaway, a woman six years his elder, and, as is certainly proved by documents, he evaded the lawful formalities, which would have entailed delay. There must, therefore, have been urgent grounds for the speedy celebration of the marriage, and the great difference of age between the parties impresses an impartial judge unpleasantly with regard to the whole transaction. Three children were born of this union, a daughter Susannah, early in 1583, and in the next year the twins Hamlet and Judith. Concerning the happiness or unhappiness of this curious couple no certain information can be obtained, but external and internal evidences go to show that they were probably not happy. Shakespeare left for London four years after his marriage, leaving his wife and children in Stratford. Nor did he allow his wife to join him during his stay in the capital in order to resume their married life. His will also contains ungracious expressions regarding her, in direct contradiction to the idea of a close and happy relation. The inner meaning also of Shakespeare's poems is not calculated to give a favourable idea of the poet's conjugal fidelity or of the happiness of his married life. The Sonnets, as well as his first narrative poem, *Venus and Adonis*, contain passages which only appear harmless if we consider them as wholly objective representations of various forms of passion, without any relation to personal experience, as is held by some literary historians. But this, as regards the Sonnets at least, is in contradiction to the innermost nature of lyric poetry, which attains its best expression when in close connection with the writer's mental and emotional life. Hence it seems most probable that the wildly passionate effusions found in the Sonnets reflect no small portion of Shakespeare's subjective life, and that inferences can be drawn from them

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with regard to his irregularities. It is only needful to read the following lines :—

> The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
> Is lust in action ; and till action, lust
> Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
> Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
> Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight,
> Past reason hunted, and no sooner had
> Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait
> On purpose laid to make the taker mad :
> Mad in pursuit, and in possesion so ;
> Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme :
> A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe ;
> Before, a joy proposed ; behind, a dream.
> All this the world well knows ; yet none knows well
> To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.
>
> *Sonnet* cxxix.

Do not these lines breathe a personality that has become intoxicated with the goblet of passion, and who, after enjoyment, is seized with remorse and disgust for itself and its transgressions, and yet always flings itself anew into the torrent of excess ? *Venus and Adonis*, too, and some of the dramas, hint at troubled and turbid experiences.

One such passage occurs in *Twelfth Night*, and one in *Venus and Adonis*. The first, *Twelfth Night*, act ii. scene 4, runs—

> . . . . Let still the woman take
> An elder than herself ; so wears she to him,
> So sways she level in her husband's heart :
> For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
> Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
> More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
> Than women's are.

These words, which Duke Orsino says to Viola disguised as a page, sound like a melancholy reminiscence of how the poet himself had been drawn, through marriage with an older woman, into an unhappy conjugal relation. Perhaps they also contain a self-accusation at having caused this

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unhappiness by his own fickleness and want of resolution. The other passage is found in the curse Venus utters after the death of Adonis.

Since thou art dead, lo! here I prophesy,
Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend:
It shall be waited on with jealousy,
Find sweet beginning, but unsavoury end;
  Ne'er settled equally, but high or low;
  That all love's pleasure shall not match his woe.

It shall be fickle, false, and full of fraud;
Bud and be blasted in a breathing-while;
The bottom poison, and the top o'erstraw'd
With sweets that shall the truest sight beguile:
  The strongest body shall it make most weak,
  Strike the wise dumb, and teach the fool to speak.

It shall be sparing, and too full of riot,
Teaching decrepit age to tread the measures;
The staring ruffian shall it keep in quiet,
Pluck down the rich, enrich the poor with treasures;
  It shall be raging-mad, and silly-mild,
  Make the young old, the old become a child.

It shall suspect where is no cause of fear;
It shall not fear where it should most mistrust;
It shall be merciful, and too severe,
And most deceiving when it seems most just;
  Perverse it shall be where it shows most toward,
  Put fear to valour, courage to the coward.

It shall be cause of war and dire events,
And set dissension 'twixt the son and sire;
Subject and servile to all discontents,
As dry combustious matter is to fire:
  Sith in his prime Death doth my love destroy,
  They that love best, their loves shall not enjoy.

Shakespeare went to London in 1586, and we may assume, since we do not know the exact reasons for his move, that it was to find a congenial sphere of action. There are no traditions, such as we have of other great poets, to show that in youth he gave promise of the mighty genius of his later life, but we may believe that he had already, when he

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changed his residence from his birthplace to the capital, some idea of what slumbered within him. Here too he is pursued by the phenomenon called by the celebrated Shakespeare scholar, Delius, the *Shakespearian Myth.* Widespread stories make out that he was driven by sore need to the lowest expedients to gain a living. He is said, for instance, to have earned his scanty daily bread by holding horses for gentlemen who were attending the theatrical performances. But these stories belong to the domain of fable, and have been invented and spread in order to throw the after greatness of the man, and the comfortable, almost splendid, position which he so soon won for himself, into stronger relief through contrast with his low and small beginning. On the contrary, Shakespeare seems very soon to have come into contact with the best literary and aristocratic company of his time. Tolerably sure information also shows that, as early as his third year in London, he was part owner of the Theatre at Blackfriars, which at the time of his arrival was under the sole direction of the celebrated actor Richard Burbage, also born in the neighbourhood of Stratford, and in all probability acquainted with Shakespeare in his youth. The Sonnets, as well as the two narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucretia*, which contain some elucidations of this period of Shakespeare's life and development, will be treated more fully in another chapter. Here we will only occupy ourselves with his work as a dramatic poet, and its consequences, which were brilliant and rapid. At the beginning of the last decade of the sixteenth century, his independent dramatic work must have begun, and was so soon followed by success, that by 1590 he had already aroused the jealousy of his predecessor and rival, Greene, who expresses himself in the following bitter words:—"Look at that crow, decked with our feathers, who prides himself on what he has torn from us. Under the cloak of a lover and a fool, he has the heart of a tiger. He thinks he has as much tragic power as the best of us.

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He is a real factotum; he thinks he can catch the whole stage upon his hook, and begin a new epoch." The envious phrase has come true. With Shakespeare a new epoch in English dramatic poetry began, or rather he and he alone was the epoch; and the name of the man who wrote this angry outpouring, and the names of all his other forerunners, are for posterity but small insignificant stars, which fade in the light of the brilliant sun, William Shakespeare. Between 1590 and 1613 Shakespeare created no less than thirty-six plays, which were for the most part original, for only four can be considered as revisions of older dramas. As to the classification of these plays, we find that in the early period erotic subjects predominated. In 1591 appeared *Love's Labour Lost;* between 1594 and 1598 *Midsummer Night's Dream;* in 1596 the *Taming of the Shrew;* in 1597 the *Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet;* in 1598 *All's Well that Ends Well.* Then follows the great cycle of the historic plays, which, with *Richard II.*, *Henry IV.* (First and Second Parts), *Henry V.*, and *Richard III.*, form a mighty whole. Beside these there stands independently *King John* and *Henry VIII.*, the latter one of the last of Shakespeare's poetical works. *Henry VI.* belongs to his earliest period of production, and is to be considered, as we shall hereafter show, only as a working over and fusion of several earlier pieces. Between 1600 and 1610 were issued his great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Othello*, as well as the most charming of his fantastic comedies. His outward material success, as well as the social position he attained, was brilliant. He soon became a man of property and a possessor of real estate in his native town, of which the income, towards the end of his life, was estimated at £400, which, in money of the present day, is equal to £1500. He lived in London in a brilliant circle of poets and authors, to which also belonged many of those members of aristocratic families who took a lively part in the intellectual life that reigned in the city. Witnesses of weight have testified enthusiastically to the

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enjoyment they drew from the conversation of these men on all subjects. Shakespeare was also an actor. He seems, however, not to have had great success in this line, for he only took subordinate parts. The *rôle* of the ghost of Hamlet's father, a small though important part, was his best performance. He appears to have taken little pleasure in the actor's art, for he soon renounced it entirely, and was only occupied at the theatre as co-proprietor and playwright. If we are compelled by indisputable internal and external evidence to acknowledge that Shakespeare's youth was not untroubled by passion and dissipation, we are, on the other hand, in a position to infer from not less unmistakable indications, that in his riper years he became a quiet, gentle, and worthy personage, in whom no one would have suspected the poacher of Stratford or the poet of many of the Sonnets. About 1614 he returned to his native town, after obtaining abundant success, fame, and a competent fortune, to enjoy there in peace and quiet the fruits of his activity. But fate did not long allow him to enjoy this rest.

As early as April 23, 1616, in the fifty-third year of his age, he died. Of the nature and details of his last illness we know nothing. A short time previously he had made his will, leaving his daughter Susannah, who had always been his favourite, and her husband, a physician, Doctor Hall, heirs to his whole fortune. It is a circumstance which gives rise to strange and peculiar conjecture that he leaves nothing whatever to his wife in the body of his will, but in a codicil testates to her his "second-best bed" and its furniture. His body lies in the church of Stratford-on-Avon. In 1752, more than a hundred years after his death, after a long period of forgetfulness of his memory and his fame, when the world once more reawaked to their value, England erected in Westminster Abbey a splendid monument to her greatest poet. The life-sized statue of the dramatist, in the costume of his time, leans on a pillar whereon are repre-

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sented the symbols of Tragedy and Comedy. His hand rests on a book in which can be read the passage from the *Tempest*, act iv. scene 1:—

> Like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

Kreyjsig, after quoting the above inscription, whose connection with the great dead to whom they are dedicated is far from clear, says, "It seems to me that Hamlet's words—

> He was a man, take him for all in all,
> We shall not look upon his like again,

would have been more appropriate upon the monument of a man of whom it may be said, if ever of any one, that he had overcome death, however suggestive the others may be of the evanescence of earthly things."

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SHAKESPEARE'S NARRATIVE POEMS

"VENUS AND ADONIS"—"LUCRETIA"

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CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARE'S NARRATIVE POEMS

"VENUS AND ADONIS"

THE first sketches for Shakespeare's two narrative poems were probably written in Stratford before his move to London. Both, however, before they were printed (*Venus and Adonis* in 1593 and *Lucretia* in 1594), were thoroughly worked over, and both were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, the poet's patron and friend. The subject of *Venus and Adonis* is the myth of the love of the goddess Venus for the beautiful youth Adonis the son of Myrrha. The beloved of the goddess was killed during the chase by a boar, and afterwards turned by her into an anemone. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of which the English translation was certainly the source whence Shakespeare drew this fable, it is simply related that Venus renounced the life of the blessed in Olympus for love of the beautiful mortal, wishing to dwell with him on earth, and that when he was seized with a passion for the chase, she warned him against the animals to whom Nature had given weapons. But the rash youth sought danger for its own sake, and, while hunting a boar, was slain by the beast, whereupon the mourning goddess turned him into an anemone. Out of this simple tale, devoid of psychological interest, Shakespeare has woven a passionate picture of the sufferings of an ardent unrequited love, which burns the more fiercely the more coldly it is met by the beloved

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being. In Venus, as Shakespeare draws her, is manifested the power of uncontrolled desire. This picture, however lovely it may appear in the splendour of the verse the poet has woven around it, of logical necessity is in the end the representation of a degeneration of character, into which the goddess is helplessly drawn by her uncontrollable inclination towards the mortal youth. She has yielded completely to her passion for the boy. Her wooing is painted by the poet with an absolutely overpowering prodigality of tenderness, in which all the fascinating charms of the lovely goddess are fully described. She lavishes prayers, threats, tears on the cold creature, who will not respond to her glowing desires. The more resistance she finds, the more wild and ardent her longing grows, the fiercer her passion blazes, causing her to break through all bounds and forget all prudence:—

> Panting oblivion, beating reason back,
> Forgetting shame's pure blush and honour's wrack.

And just as love at first fairly overpowers her, and robs her of all reason, of all self-command, so at the end, when she holds in her arms the bleeding body of the vainly loved boy, she forgets that she is the goddess of love, and that all the imprecations she utters are directed against herself. She curses love with the frightful curse we quoted (p. 60). This malediction has great poetic power; it is at once a picture of the pains and sufferings that attend on love, of the joys that cause us to forget those sufferings, of the emotions the poet has represented with such warmth and truth in his great song of songs, *Romeo and Juliet.* In reference to this poem Gervinus calls Shakespeare "a Croesus in poetical conception, thought, and description, a master and conqueror in dealings with love, a giant in passion and tender sentimental power." But he also stigmatises the work as one mighty dazzling error, such as writers so often commit, mistaking uncontrolled glow of passion for poetry. This

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judgment was not, however, shared by the poet's contemporaries; on the contrary, this early work won great admiration. Its success was so rapid as to recall that which Goethe obtained with his *Werther*. The poem passed through several editions, and was imitated by other poets. I must here defend Shakespeare against an accusation which has been brought against him, and which appears to have some foundation if we look at the matter superficially. He has been accused of losing his head over his delight in the subject of his poem, and of forgetting the enormous difference between the noble pure love he afterwards portrayed so beautifully, and the mere ardour of the senses felt by Venus. This reproach is not, however, founded on fact. However glowing the colours with which he invests the unrequited passion of the goddess, he knows quite well that he is not painting the love which ennobles and exalts both heart and mind, but only the desire of the senses. He shows this in the passage wherein he describes the horse of Adonis that has broken loose and woos in wild beastly fashion. Here he obviously does not contrast the scene with the wooing of Venus, but ranks it on the same level. He makes Adonis say reprovingly to the goddess that it is not love which "beats reason back, forgets shame's pure blush," and "wrecks honour," but unbridled desire. To be sure this purer note is only lightly touched in the poem. As a whole, sensual pictures and descriptions predominate.

"LUCRETIA"

Shakespeare's second narrative poem, *Lucretia*, has little of the poetic charm of *Venus and Adonis*, while its merits suffer by comparison with its classical source, the tale as given by the ancient Roman historian Livy, of whom Niebuhr said, "Who after Livy can tell the tale of the despair of Lucretia?" I quote the passage to prove the

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truth of this remark. "In this camp,* as is usual in long but not very serious wars, provisions were abundant, but more so for the officers than the soldiers; at least the royal princes often passed their time in banquets and drinking bouts. As they sat at one of these banquets with Sextus Tarquinius, Tarquinius Collatinus, the son of Egerius, being present, they began to talk of women. Each man praised his own wife extravagantly. As a serious quarrel was beginning, Collatinus exclaimed that there was no need of words; in a few hours they might every one be convinced how far his Lucretia excelled all other women. 'Why,' said he, 'since we are full of youthful strength, should we not mount our horses and satisfy ourselves with our own eyes as to the doings of our wives. Then let whatever they are doing when thus surprised by their husbands be to us a sign of what they are.' The wine had flown to their heads, they all cried, 'Up, to horse.' The horses were fetched, and they flew towards Rome. Arriving there in the dusk of evening, they went thence to Collatia, where they found Lucretia, not, as they had surprised the king's daughters-in-law, feasting with their female friends, but sitting in the midst of her maidens, in the apartment of the women, occupied in women's work. Lucretia had won the prize. The husband and the sons of Tarquin were received with friendliness, the victorious spouse invited his friends hospitably to supper. It was then that Sextus Tarquinius, filled with passion, was seized with the evil desire to rob Lucretia by violence of her honour, her beauty, and her brilliantly assured virtue. They returned from their nocturnal youthful frolic to the camp. But after a few days, Sextus, unknown to Collatinus, with one attendant only, returned to Collatia. Here he was hospitably received by the women, who, of course, knew nothing of his evil designs. When, after supper, he was led into his sleeping-

* During the siege of Ardea by the Romans in the reign of the last Roman king, Tarquin the Proud.

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chamber, he stole, burning with passion, while all the household seemed to be asleep, into Lucretia's chamber, with a drawn sword, and pressing his left hand upon her breast, said to her, 'Silence, Lucretia. I am Sextus Tarquinius; you die if you utter a sound.' The woman awoke trembling from her sleep, and found herself helpless and in danger of her life; Tarquin told her of his love, and besought hers, adding threats to his prayers, and seeking in every way to overcome her resistance. Seeing that she remained obstinate, and that she was not to be induced through fear of death to yield to his wishes, he had recourse to the fear of shame. He threatened that, when he had killed her, he would lay a naked slave beside her couch, that it might appear she had been slain after a shameful breach of her marriage vow. Either because of this threat or because of violence, desire gained the victory over this obstinate modesty, and the savage Tarquin hastened away after he had obtained this disgraceful triumph over a woman's honour. Lucretia, however, in despair at her misfortune, sent the same message to Rome to her father, and to Ardea to her husband, saying that each should come to her, bringing some friends, as a dreadful thing had happened. Spurius Lucretius (Lucretia's father) came with Publius Valerius, the son of Volesus; Collatinus brought Lucius Junius Brutus, whom he had met by chance as he returned to Rome, after receiving his wife's message. Lucretia, at the sight of her people, broke into bitter tears, and when her husband asked her if she were well, answered, 'No! how can a woman be well when she has lost her honour? Collatinus, the traces of a strange man are on thy couch, but my body alone is stained, my soul has remained pure, my death shall bear witness to it. But you, give me a sacred promise that the crime shall not go unpunished. It is Sextus Tarquinius, who, an enemy, a false guest, last night, sword in hand, won that shameful victory which, if ye are men, shall also prove fatal to him.' They all, one after another, took

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the oath, and consoled the sorely distressed woman, saying that she who had suffered violence was not guilty, but the wicked ravisher; that where free consent was wanting, guilt was wanting too.

"'You,' she answered, 'will think of what each of you owes to the guilty man, but I, though I declare myself free from guilt, still cannot declare myself free from punishment, and, after the example of Lucretia, may no dishonoured woman ever remain alive.' After speaking these words, she drove the dagger, hidden in her clothing, into her heart, and fell down dead. Her husband and father cried aloud. While they abandoned themselves to grief, Brutus drew the bloody knife from Lucretia's wound, held it up on high, and spoke: 'By this innocent blood, shed for so foul a kingly crime, I swear, and I call you, ye gods, to witness, that I will pursue Tarquinius Superbus, and his guilty spouse, and the whole generation of their children, with fire and sword, wheresoever it may be, and will never more suffer that he, or any other king, bear rule in Rome.' Then he gave the dagger to Collatinus, who passed it to Lucretius and Valerius; and they were all amazed as at a miracle, and asked each other whence had this new spirit come over Brutus.* As he had adjured them, they took the oath he asked. Straight from their mourning to revenge they went, following Brutus as their leader, who had called upon them to destroy the kingly power. They carried Lucretia's body into the Forum, and aroused the people, who were filled with horror and astonishment at the untoward end. Each one denounced strongly the crime committed by the king's son. The crowd was deeply moved by the father's grief. Brutus reproved their useless tears and lamentations, and told them that the only step worthy of men, of Romans, was to take up arms and avenge this shameful crime."

* According to Roman tradition, to which of course this tale, as told by Livy, belongs, Brutus had feigned to be an idiot, in order to appear harmless to the envious Tarquin, and so to escape any violence offered to himself.

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Such the narrative of Livy, who goes on to describe the victory of the revolution and the expulsion of the royal family. Powerfully and nobly is the true antique Roman spirit here described. The truly tragic impression that all must experience who read this passage arises from the character of Lucretia as depicted by the Roman historian. The sorrow of this woman is incurable, but in her pain, her despair, she never loses self-composure, she never hesitates as to the path she must tread, and she enters on this path with exalted strength of soul, after obtaining, through the oath taken by the men, the certainty that her shame and its consequences, her voluntary death, will not remain unavenged. Shakespeare, in his presentation of Lucretia, has entirely obliterated her antique character. The Roman heroine becomes in his hands a modern, philosophising, sentimental lady, whose words flow so abundantly that her heroic action is almost overwhelmed by their rush. There is a marked contradiction between her form of speech and that to which we are used in Shakespeare's dramas. In these the dialogue is subordinated to the action, and in the narrative poem the form of the tale is lost in a flood of speech. Before Tarquin proceeds to his crime, he considers its pros and cons in rambling verbose speech. It is as if his conscience and evil propensities were formally disputing with each other. The whole is most unnatural at such a moment, and most unusual in Shakespeare, for the monologues in his dramas are particularly distinguished by their masterly power of representing the most terrible experiences, the struggles of passion and conscience, with the sharpest outlines and with infinite truthfulness. We need only recall Macbeth's soliloquies after meeting the witches, and on the night of the murder. Here we encounter the very opposite. Just when Lucretia, after the terrible event, feels her position to be unendurable, and death the only exit for her trouble, she breaks out into an interminable monologue. She abuses

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at great length all the circumstances which made the crime possible, the night, the hour, the opportunity, then she utters prolix reflections concerning suicide. The Shakespeare of the dramas would have carefully avoided all such improbable loquacity which philosophises in the most unnatural manner after taking so stern a decision, weighing reasons for and against the proposed deed. Only slight touches here and there betray the hand of the poet, whose great mastery consists in his fine and accurate psychological analysis, and who always puts the right word into the mouth of the right personage in the right place. But the whole poem was subject to the pernicious sway of Italian poetry, which at that time exercised great influence in England. These works were specially distinguished by their so-called conceits. Under this heading are included peculiar, strange, and astonishing reflections and representations, in which profound philosophical arguments are connected in endlessly prolix speeches with the most ordinary events. They also dealt in a diffuse and vapid manner with the deepest and most important situations, rendering these insupportable and tedious. This poetry is full of forced wit, of puns, one epigrammatic point calls forth another, the attention is perpetually claimed by sharp logical or sophistical antitheses and distinctions, by psychological assertions, and appeals to the feelings of the reader. The only high aims of poetry are merely secondary circumstances in this style of art. Let us imagine Lucretia in the mental state she experienced when Tarquin has accomplished his evil purpose and left her, a condition of mind partly of despair at the unalterable misfortune which has occurred, partly of immovable resolution as to what remained for her to do. Let us fancy this Lucretia about to write to her husband, to recall him that he may witness how, by a voluntary death, she atones for what has happened. How would the Shakespeare whom we know from the plays have made her write this letter, and what form would it have

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taken? With furious haste, with trembling hand, without reflection, Lucretia would have jotted down a few words. These words would have given with terrible brevity the cry of the doomed and despairing creature. "Come! a frightful thing has happened!" But how does Lucretia write in this poem? Like an intellectual fine lady at her writing-desk, who is studying how to compose a clear epistle, and is anxious to choose, out of all the expressions that come into her mind, the choicest and most appropriate. One seems too abrupt, another too pointed, she must select. This presentation is absolutely unnatural. Some explanation is needed to show how a poet who in his dramas so contradicts and defies what are called the rules of conventionality, was in his early poems so completely under their influence, following a prevailing fashion at the cost of truth to psychology and nature, and copying the characteristics of the style of poetry in vogue to an extravagant degree. This explanation is found in the direction taken by the literary movement in England, and in the personal relations entered into by the poet soon after his removal to London, and, as regards the extravagances and exuberances, by the common experience that, when a commanding genius takes a wrong turn, its aberrations far exceed those of the minor spirits by whom it has been led out of the right way. The Italian epic poets of the sixteenth century, with lessons newly learnt from the classic authors just resuscitated from their graves, had freed poetry from the roughness and artificiality into which the chivalric poems of Western Europe had sunk at the close of the fifteenth century. It is true the great admiration for the subjects chosen by Ariosto and Tasso, inspired with the faded glories of chivalrous deeds and knightly heroes, was waning; but people still continued to admire their beautiful form, their splendid metre, their flowing, elegant language. Form came to be looked on as the highest poetic quality, to strive after perfection of form the truest aim. Wherever this idea comes uppermost, the endeavour after

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beauty of form soon sinks into artificiality and falsification of human nature. The poet no longer tries to be human, but pursues a voluntary conformity, called "conventionalities." At the summit of such psychological and artistic artificialities stand the allegorical and pastoral romances of the sixteenth century in Spain and Italy, brought into England in 1586 by Sir Philip Sidney. Italian lyric poetry had already been naturalised there by the Earl of Surrey. This was just at the time when the Reformation had freed the minds of men from the chains of Mediæval Scholasticism, when ancient literature had risen from its grave, when the art of printing had enabled knowledge and literary discussion to be diffused with unheard-of ease and rapidity. Already, under Henry VIII., the Court, and not least the King himself, had begun to find pleasure in masques and allegorical and pastoral representations. Under Elizabeth, to whom the Latin and Greek authors in the original were not unknown, a golden age of art and science seemed to have begun. In this well-prepared field a cultivated and æsthetically competent nobility sowed the seed of the new Italian art. They were a select band of men who undertook this enterprise, distinguished for their prominent intellectual and artistic gifts, and also for the tragic fate which overtook so many of their number. The Earl of Surrey, who fell a victim to the tyranny of Henry VIII.; Wyatt, who died young, and was said to have been the lover of Queen Anne Bullen; Philip Sidney, the author of *A Defence of Poetry;* and the famous naval hero, Sir Walter Raleigh, who was innocently executed, belonged to this group. In Shakespeare's time, Lord Vaux, Thomas Sackville Earl of Dorset, the Earl of Oxford, and Shakespeare's intimate friend, the Earl of Southampton, were active in this direction. It would have been strange if the poet, in contact with this noble circle of artistic and literary friends, had not also joined the prevailing stream of æsthetic tendency. But he soon freed himself, and already in his early drama, *Love's Labour Lost,*

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he rather burlesques than imitates it. Lucretia is the only female figure in all Shakespeare's poetical works which was created under this influence. Hence, in spite of the intrinsic beauty of her character, in spite of pity for her sad fate and admiration of her heroic resolution, in spite, too, of the acknowledgment due to the poet for its many wonderfully beautiful passages, as well as for its fine artistic form, this poem leaves on the reader, as a whole, no more agreeable or beneficial impression than does that of Venus, mad as she is in love, and extravagant first in her wooing, and then in her lament for her lost love.

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FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAYS BELONGING TO SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST PERIOD

"TITUS ANDRONICUS"—"PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE"—
"HENRY VI."—"THE COMEDY OF ERRORS"—
"THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"

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CHAPTER V

THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAYS BELONGING TO SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST PERIOD

"TITUS ANDRONICUS"

Tamora—Lavinia

IT is manifest already in the first period of Shakespeare's poetical activity, that while still dependent on foreign models, his genius could boast an exceeding versatility, since he used materials and plays of the most diverse kinds as the subjects of his creations and paraphrases. Among the pieces of which a part certainly, a part probably, belong to this epoch, we find the terrible heroic tragedy *Titus Andronicus.* This play, after the manner of Greene, Marlowe, and others, who ruled the English stage before Shakespeare, piles up horrors and deeds of blood in a way insupportable to moderns. To this date pertains also the curious original drama *Pericles*, which in the language of the present day would be described as a romantic play; further, the compilation of his historical play *Henry VI.;* and finally the pieces *The Comedy of Errors*, suggested by the "*menechmae*" of the Roman comic poet Plautus, and the *Taming of the Shrew*, founded on an older play of which the author is unknown—plays belonging to quite another category. When we contemplate the exceedingly varied female characters in these plays, we remark, in spite of their diversity, a trait common to almost all, and that is, an unpleasant presentation of the sex from every

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point of view. Nearly all the women are endowed with the most unlovely qualities. Some of them are caricatures, like the *Maid of Orleans*, for Shakespeare cannot be absolved from the accusation of having painted an ugly distortion of a touching and noble historical personage to please English hatred and prejudice. Others are monsters, like Tamora in *Titus Andronicus*, or untamable and passionate masculine women, like Queen Margaret and the Duchess of Gloster in *Henry VI.* Others, again, are so weak that they may be said to have no character at all, like Princess Anne and Queen Elizabeth (Woodville) in *Richard III.*, a play written in close connection with *Henry VI.* The women of the comedies have the most unamiable feminine characteristics, by which means they torment the lives of their parents, brothers, and husbands, and make a hell of homes that should be rendered the abodes of peace by their lovable womanliness. Only a very few women in these plays are so drawn as to win our sympathy; such an one, for instance, is Lavinia, the unfortunate victim of Tamora in *Titus Andronicus*, and Marina, the daughter of Pericles. We cannot shake off the notion that these unlovely pictures in the plays of Shakespeare's first period, which lie so close to the time of his life at Stratford, must be connected with unpleasant experiences of the fair sex, for which he avenged himself, as it were, by these ungracious representations of womanhood. Detailed accounts of his youth, the circumstances which led him to contract marriage at an age so comparatively early, the nature of his married life, the reasons for his sudden departure for London while his wife remained behind in Stratford, are not sufficiently familiar to allow us to build up conjectures with certainty. But there is great probability that his married experiences were of an unpleasant kind, and that these induced that angry and bitter temper against the whole female sex which he, unconsciously or of set purpose, wreaks upon them in these plays. Analogies for this are not wanting in

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the lives and development of other poets. To quote one example from German literary history, the equivocal and slippery relations Goethe represents in his youthful comedy of the *Accomplices* is nothing but a poetically expressed account of his juvenile experiences with divers women and girls. And what is the romance of Goethe's youth, *The Sorrows of Werther*, but a picture of the feelings and passions which filled the breast of the young poet, and which he strove to master by representing them plastically and objectively in the form of a tale? So, also, the exaggerated figures, the wild measureless passions, of Schiller's boyish work *The Robbers*, was simply the expression of a young soul's reaction, its longing to attain to freedom and independence, and to shake off the dull and heavy pressure which weighed upon it in the *Karlschule*, making the place more of a prison than a high-school. In the same way the representations of female characters in the plays of Shakespeare's first period, so markedly different from his later attitude, may have sprung from his personal experiences, even though this fact cannot be as clearly explained and proved as in the case of the German authors we have cited.

It now behoves us to examine in detail the different female characters to justify our assertions. We will first give our attention to the women of *Titus Andronicus*, the horrible Tamora, and the lovely, innocent, and unfortunate Lavinia, because this tragedy, if Shakespeare was its author, was certainly one of his earliest works.

According to excellent evidence, it was already produced in 1580, that is, soon after Shakespeare's arrival in London. English literary historians are divided in opinion as to its authenticity, and one is tempted to wish that those are right who deny Shakespeare's authorship, for its action is really too horrible. Circumstantial evidence can be set against circumstantial evidence. Some assert that the play was written by an older author, and that Shakespeare only changed and amended it. Others, again, no less credible, simply

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enroll the play in their list of Shakespeare's works without further remark. Nor is an examination of the work itself calculated to dispel our doubts or to lead us to certain conclusions. Shakespeare's most terrible tragedies make an entirely different impression to this piece with its monstrous and fearful action; while, on the other hand, the tragedies of his forerunners, Greene, Kyd, and Marlowe, with the single exception of *Dr. Faustus*, are exactly of the same nature. In those great works of the tragic muse we feel that the poet sympathises with the heavy sorrows he lays before us in their full intensity; that he allows no misfortune to overtake his personages to which his natural disposition, his own faults, or the pitiless march of Fate, that destroys guilty and innocent alike, has not of logical necessity led up. But in *Titus Andronicus*, it would seem as if the poet delighted, with savage complacency, in the disgusting horrors which he strews broadcast, without assigning any psychological motive save the brutal rage of the criminals who commit them. The most terrible malefactors of Shakespeare's tragedies, Iago or Richard III., are angels of light in comparison with the Moor Aaron, who reverses the idea of the Emperor Titus, and counts the day lost in which he committed no crime, no deed of blood. Shakespeare generally endeavours to show us some link between the criminal and his better instincts. In *Titus Andronicus* he portrays a beast who wallows brutally in blood amid brutal desires and brutal talk. But because of the gulf which divides this play from Shakespeare's other works, we may not decide absolutely against his authorship. This abyss, in another form, is scarcely less deep than the wide gap which divides Schiller's *Robbers* from his *Wallenstein*. The revolution that took place in the moral and artistic nature of Schiller, enabling him to pass from the wild, passionate Storm-and-stress tragedy, alike uncontrolled in plot and in expression, to the dignified calm and wise measure of *Wallenstein*, was no less great than that which Shakespeare

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must have experienced before he overstepped the distance between *Titus Andronicus* and *Lear* and *Macbeth.* Sanguinary scenes, as we remarked before, were common at that time in real life, and were often so terrible that poet and public alike were hardened with regard to them. The fine artistic sense of his riper years may not yet have been developed in the young poet. Or he may have entered into competition with those who were at that time rivals for the favour of the theatrical public, such as with Christopher Marlowe, and hence strove to attack him on his own ground of blood-and-terror tragedy, which so took the fancy of the people. We also know from trustworthy witnesses that *Titus Andronicus* long continued a favourite and an oft-repeated piece of stage *repertoire.* There are great differences also in form between that and the later, riper plays; the versification is more regular, the speeches are lacking in ornament, in metaphors, in wise sentences, in profound turns of thought. The mad rage of passion, the almost beastly fury of hate, of delight in crime, placed in the mouth of the Moor Aaron, is in complete contradiction to the safe instructions which the poet causes Hamlet to enjoin upon the actors, recalling that very out-Heroding of Herod against which he warns. But even here it is possible that a novice was led astray by the bombast and exuberance of speech which corresponded to the popular taste of the day. We might also doubt the authenticity of the narrative poems, if they had not been handed down to us on incontestable evidence as Shakespeare's. The *concettisti* style which prevails in them, and also appears in the early dramas, and of which echoes are even heard in *Romeo and Juliet,* is as far removed from Shakespeare's great tragedies as is the outrageous bombast of Titus, and the poet may just as likely have imitated the one as the other. The strongest evidence, however, in proof that the play was not conceived by Shakespeare, but was merely a paraphrase of some other writer, is the distorted characters, the

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inconceivable roughness of the psychology, and the extreme improbability of the action. Titus Andronicus returns from a victorious campaign against the Goths, bringing with him as prisoners Tamora, queen of the Goths, and her three sons, Alarbus, Chiron and Demetrius. But he, too, has had to pay for his victory. Two sons were slain in battle, and in his triumphal entry he carries with him their biers. Their corpses are buried solemnly in the ancestral tomb after the eldest son of Tamora is hewn to pieces and burnt as a sacrificial offering. Tamora entreats and beseeches Titus with ardent words to spare her dear son, and as this short passage is almost the only one in which this woman shows any human feeling, we will give it place.

TAMORA *speaks:—*

Stay, Roman brethren!—Gracious conqueror,
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,
A mother's tears in passion for her son:
And, if thy sons were ever dear to thee,
O, think my son to be as dear to me!
Sufficeth not that we are brought to Rome,
To beautify thy triumphs, and return,
Captive to thee and to thy Roman yoke,
But must my sons be slaughter'd in the streets,
For valiant doings in their country's cause?
O, if to fight for king and commonweal
Were piety in thine, it is in these.
Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood:
Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
Draw near them then in being merciful;
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge;
Thrice noble Titus, spare my first-born son.

Titus Andronicus, act i. scene i.

The lines seem to me weak in comparison with the richness of the Shakespearian diction as shown in his greater works. The prayer of the queen is vain; her son is offered to the *Manes* of the fallen sons of Titus, and these are then solemnly entombed. Titus, in full power and popular with the army, thanks to his victory, might easily make himself

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master of the vacant Roman throne, for which the late Emperor's two sons, Saturninus and Bassianus, are at strife, and his brother, the Tribune Marcus, counsels him unhesitatingly to seize it. But Titus remains true to Saturninus, and unselfishly makes him Emperor, presenting to him the Gothic queen as a spoil of war, and would also fain give to him in marriage, against the will of his sons, his daughter Lavinia, already betrothed to Bassianus. As Bassianus, assisted by the sons of Titus, tries to seize his bride by force, Titus himself kills one of them. But the ungrateful Emperor forgets these services, and, led away by the luscious beauty of Tamora, makes her his wife. Titus, who has experienced shameful ingratitude from the man he has raised to the throne, is foolish enough to expect gratitude from her who is also indebted to him for her elevation. She, who implored him in vain to spare her son's life, considers only how she can be avenged on him and his family. She brings about, through her sons, the death of Bassianus, and causes Lavinia to be ravished and mutilated. Titus is ignorant of what has happened. Lavinia, who overhears people speaking of the perpetrators of the deed, gathers that her brothers are accused of murdering Bassianus. She cannot speak, for her tongue has been cut out, but we might fancy she had also lost her hearing, for she, who knows only too well that the conjectures she overhears have no foundation, does not reveal this in any way, either by gesture or movement. Only by chance a method is discovered of getting her evidence, viz., the placing of a staff in her mouth, with which she writes in the sand the names of the guilty. Tamora is enticed through a most clumsy trick into a position in which she is sacrificed to the vengeance of Titus. So badly is the play put together, so stupid are its psychological motives, that we hardly like to regard it as an original work, even an early one, of a poet whose prominent gift was acute and refined psychological characterisation. Tamora seems, at first, worthy of our sympathy when we hear her

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plead with warm mother-love for her son's life, but our hearts are soon turned away because we perceive that her fundamental character-traits are falsehood, hypocrisy, sensuality, and unbridled thirst for vengeance. She counsels the Emperor to become reconciled with the family of Titus, who had taken part against Saturninus while aiding Bassianus to carry off his bride, Lavinia, by force. She succeeds, too, in effecting the reconciliation, whispering to the Emperor that he may leave vengeance to her; she will annihilate the whole hated race, in atonement for the death of her son, whose life she had begged in vain. The second act shows her in her entire inhuman depravity. Through a perversity difficult to explain, she is seized with a passion that may almost be called bestial in its violence for the hideous and atrociously wicked Moor, Aaron. She gives expression to this passion in shameless words which sound frightful in the mouth of a woman. Surprised by Bassianus and Lavinia, and upbraided by the latter in words which also cannot be called womanly, she induces her sons, Chiron and Demetrius, to stab Bassianus by telling them an absolutely false tale concerning her meeting with the two, sparing Lavinia only for a fate worse than the most painful death. All Lavinia's entreaties are in vain. Incited by their mother, the sons make the helpless woman their victim, they then cruelly mutilate her, tearing out her tongue and cutting off her hands, so that she can neither speak nor write an account of the horrible and inhuman deed. In this scene the characterisation of Tamora reaches its climax; what follows throws no new light upon a figure which arouses only disgust and hatred. This woman is ruled by every evil passion, ready for every dreadful deed, given over to the most unbridled sensuality—in short, a female monster, whose destruction, when she is lured, with incredible want of skill, into the toils of her enemies, we note without any feeling of regret.

Lavinia is a pure, innocent being, who clings with tender

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love to father and brothers. Her terrible fate fills us with heartfelt pity. But her delineation is entirely colourless, and, if we may so express ourselves, indifferent. She has none of the striking power, none of the unspeakable charm, of some others of Shakespeare's women. In the scene where she surprises the Empress in her criminal rendezvous with the Moor, she uses ugly and unfeminine words, inappropriate to so gentle and docile a being. As a whole, we take leave of the play and of its two female figures with a sensation that we should be more content if we could find satisfactory grounds for denying it Shakespeare's authorship.

"PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE"

Marina—Dionyza

The material for this play, which, from good evidence, we know to have been much admired, is derived from a Greek novel of the fifth or sixth century, whose hero was called Appollonius of Tyre. The same story, always under the same name, is found in innumerable romances, popular tales and poems. The maker, whether it be Shakespeare or another, had at least two English versions of the legend to refer to. The fable belongs to that class of tales which, on account of the many events and adventures it contains, were continually used as material for dramatic work, because they pleased and satisfied the public appetite for shows full of action.

But the task of bestowing on epic material a dramatic form is inadequately executed in this piece. Narrative and pantomime are called to the aid of dramatic representation. Repeated prologues help out the halting action, which comprises the whole life of Pericles, from youth to late manhood, and is only held together by the unity of his personality. A certain moralising tendency links the opening of the play with the close. The criminal relation between the daughter of Antiochus and her own

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father, with which it begins, is evidently set in opposition to the immovable steadfastness with which Marina, at the end of the drama, defends her innocence against threatening dangers, against seduction, and against violence. Not only is she victorious in the struggle, but she disseminates a purifying and ameliorating influence over men who are sunk deep in immorality and sensuality. This moralising tendency is insisted on in the play as strongly as in the old Moralities, and hence it is far removed from the manner in which Shakespeare hides skilfully, as under a veil, the moral teachings he intends to preach under cover of the action of his later works. It must, therefore, be concluded that *Pericles* was not an original play, but an older piece which Shakespeare worked over, introducing many changes and improvements. On careful examination, we can discover passages which reveal the master's hand. The figure of Marina, the daughter of Pericles, is of infinite loveliness, presented with much of the refinement to which we are accustomed in the female characters of Shakespeare's riper works. True she is only sketched, but in detached traits and in the whole conception we already note his profound knowledge and great skill in interpreting the female heart. It would be unjust to the poet to exclude this pure lovely creation from a work devoted to Shakespeare's female characters. Whatever our conviction as regards the authorship of the whole play of *Pericles*, the figure of Marina unmistakably bears the stamp of Shakespeare's genius. Pericles, returning to his own country with his wife Thaisa, the daughter of King Simonides of Pentapolis, is overtaken by a tempest. Thaisa, during the awful storm, amid fearful suffering, has given birth to a daughter, and now lies in a swoon, which all, including Pericles, take for death. The superstition of the crew, who believe that the ship, and therefore they themselves, are inevitably doomed to destruction if the supposed corpse remains on board, forces Pericles to commit

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his wife in a wooden casket to the deep. He does this most unwillingly, for the body, though apparently dead, still maintains life. The storm subsides, and Pericles with the child, whom he has named Marina, because she was born at sea, and an old woman, his wife's nurse, arrive safely at Tarsus, where his friend Cleon and Queen Dionyza are the rulers. After a while he hears news of troubles in his capital, Tyre, which force him to return thither in great haste, leaving Marina and her nurse Lychorida with his friends, whom he implores that they tend the child carefully, and give her an education suitable to her father's princely station. Both Cleon and Dionyza pledge themselves by a sacred promise faithfully to fulfil the part of parents to the little creature, according to Pericles' wishes. Pericles takes leave of them with heartfelt thanks. The prologue to the third act relates that Marina has grown up a lovely and fascinating girl, who wins all hearts, having been by Cleon's care carefully educated in all sciences and arts, especially in music. But cruel envy steals into the heart of Dionyza, and causes her to forget all womanly tenderness and pity. Her own daughter is cast into the shade by Marina, and Dionyza cannot bear to see how the stranger receives universal homage, and how her own daughter, Philotea, when she seeks to vie with Marina in any accomplishment, such as song or embroidery, is always vanquished; as

> "With the dove of Paphos might the crow
> Vie feathers white."

All praise bestowed upon Marina is given in a grudging spirit. Dionyza resolves to destroy Marina, who has no protector, for her faithful nurse, Lychorida, is dead. She orders her servant Leonine to slay the "goodly creature," as the murderer himself calls her. Leonine consents, albeit unwillingly. Marina appears in all her sweetness, bewailing with profound grief the death of her faithful nurse, and of the mother lost to her so early:

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> Ah me, poor maid!
> Born in a tempest, when my mother died.
> This world to me is like a lasting storm,
> Whirring me from my friends.

With hateful hypocrisy, Dionyza exhorts her not to lament so over her nurse's death, lest Pericles, on his return, which is soon expected, consider her troubled eyes and pale cheeks as a sign that they have not tended her properly. With well-feigned kindness she advises the poor child to take a walk on the sea-shore in the fresh air, and gives her the servant who has promised to put her to death as a companion. When this man tells her that he has been ordered by his mistress to kill her, she breaks into moving lamentations and protestations of innocence. She cannot understand why Dionyza seeks her life. She says:

> I never did her hurt in all my life,
> I never spake bad word or did ill turn
> To any living creature:
> I never kill'd a mouse, nor hurt a fly:
> I trod upon a worm against my will, but I wept for it.

She appeals to Leonine's gentle heart:

> I saw you lately
> When you caught hurt in parting two that fought:
> Good sooth, it show'd well in you.

She calls upon him, with pretty flattery, to come between her and his lady, and "save the weaker." But Leonine is deaf to her entreaties, and would have carried out his deadly purpose, were he not hindered by an occurrence that indeed saves Marina's life, but reserves her for a fate compared to which sudden death were a blessing. Pirates land while she is struggling for dear life with Leonine, and carry her off. Pericles, on his arrival in Tarsus, is informed by Dionyza, who has been told by Leonine that he slew Marina, and by Cleon, who abhors the crime, but will

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not betray his wife, that Marina died a natural death, and is shown a monument erected to her memory. Overcome with grief, Pericles abandons himself to gloomy misanthropy, refuses to return to Tyre, but cruises restlessly about the world on his ship. In the meantime, the pirates have carried Marina to Mytilene and sold her to a house of ill-fame. In this shameful place, amid these horrible surroundings, the strength and golden purity of her character shine brilliantly. She resists all the seductions of the young noblemen who frequent the house, all the threats of the owners, who wish to make a profit out of her beauty. And besides this, she also makes an impression on the young men by her purity and virtuous speech, so absolutely in contradiction to the place in which they find her. She wins over Lysimachus, governor of Mytilene, to such a degree, that he declares later on that he would be proud to marry her if she could be proved to belong to a noble family. At last she even wins over a servant of the house, who assists her in escaping from this den of iniquity. She finds refuge in a respectable family, where she earns an ample and honourable subsistence by her singing, her dancing, and her skill in woman's work. Meanwhile, Pericles' ship has arrived at Mytilene. He remains on board, gloomy, sullen, apart from all human intercourse, speaking to none and receiving none. In vain Lysimachus the governor, who comes to salute him, strives to arouse him from his motionless, melancholy silence. It then happens that a gentleman of the suite reminds him of Marina, and proposes that she should try with the wonder-working sound of her voice to obtain some healing power over the king. Lysimachus eagerly consents, and Marina is sent for. At first her singing does not awake Pericles' attention, but, as if drawn towards him by some secret attraction, she stays by him and talks to him. The scene which follows, and the manner in which it leads to the mutual recognition of father and daughter, plainly reveals Shakespeare.

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ACT V. Scene I.

MARINA *speaks*:—

Marina. I am a maid,
My lord, that ne'er before invited eyes,
But have been gazed on like a comet: she speaks,
My lord, that, may be, hath endured a grief
Might equal yours, if both were justly weigh'd.
Though wayward fortune did malign my state,
My derivation was from ancestors
Who stood equivalent with mighty kings:
But time hath rooted out my parentage,
And to the world and awkward casualties
Bound me in servitude. (*Aside.*) I will desist;
But there is something glows upon my cheek,
And whispers in mine ear 'Go not till he speak.'
Pericles. My fortunes—parentage—good parentage—
To equal mine!—was it not thus? what say you?
Mar. I said, my lord, if you did know my parentage,
You would not do me violence.
Per. I do think so. Pray you, turn your eyes upon me.
You are like something that—What country-woman?
Here of these shores?
Mar. No, nor of any shores:
Yet I was mortally brought forth, and am
No other than I appear.
Per. I am great with woe, and shall deliver weeping.
My dearest wife was like this maid, and such a one
My daughter might have been: my queen's square brows;
Her stature to an inch; as wand-like straight;
As silver-voiced; her eyes as jewel-like
And cased as richly; in pace another Juno;
Who starves the ears she feeds, and makes them hungry,
The more she gives them speech. Where do you live
Mar. Where I am but a stranger: from the deck
You may discern the place.
Per. Where were you bred?
And how achieved you these endowments, which
You make more rich to owe?
Mar. If I should tell my history, it would seem
Like lies disdain'd in the reporting.
Per. Prithee, speak:
Falseness cannot come from thee; for thou look'st
Modest as Justice, and thou seem'st a palace
For the crown'd Truth to dwell in: I will believe thee,
And make my senses credit thy relation
To points that seem impossible; for thou look'st

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Like one I loved indeed. What were thy friends?
Didst thou not say, when I did push thee back—
Which was when I perceived thee—that thou camest
From good descending?

Mar. So indeed I did.

Per. Report thy parentage. I think thou saidst
Thou hadst been toss'd from wrong to injury,
And that thou thought'st thy griefs might equal mine,
If both were open'd.

Mar. Some such thing
I said and said no more but what my thoughts
Did warrant me was likely.

Per. Tell thy story;
If thine consider'd prove the thousandth part
Of my endurance, thou art a man, and I
Have suffer'd like a girl: yet thou dost look
Like Patience gazing on king's graves, and smiling
Extremity out of act. What were thy friends?
How lost thou them? Thy name, my most kind virgin?
Recount, I do beseech thee: come, sit by me.

Mar. My name is Marina.

Per. O, I am mock'd,
And thou by some incensèd god sent hither
To make the world to laugh at me.

Mar. Patience, good sir,
Or here I'll cease.

Per. Nay, I'll be patient.
Thou little know'st how thou dost startle me,
To call thyself Marina.

Mar. The name
Was given me by one that had some power,
My father, and a king.

Per. How! a king's daughter?
And call'd Marina?

Mar. You said you would believe me;
But, not to be a troubler of your peace,
I will end here.

Per. But are you flesh and blood?
Have you a working pulse? and are no fairy?
Motion! Well; speak on. Where were you born?
And wherefore call'd Marina?

Mar. Call'd Marina,
For I was born at sea.

Per. At sea! what mother?

Mar. My mother was the daughter of a king;
Who died the minute I was born
As my good nurse Lychorida hath oft
Deliver'd weeping.

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Per. O, stop there a little!
(*Aside.*) This is the rarest dream that e'er dull sleep
Did mock sad fools withal: this cannot be:
My daughter's buried. Well: where were you bred?
I'll hear you more, to the bottom of your story,
And never interrupt you.
Mar. You scorn: believe me, 'twere best I did give o'er.
Per. I will believe you by the syllable
Of what you shall deliver. Yet, give me leave:
How came you in these parts? where were you bred?
Mar. The king my father did in Tarsus leave me;
Till cruel Cleon, with his wicked wife,
Did seek to murder me: and having woo'd
A villain to attempt it, who having drawn to do't,
A crew of pirates came and rescued me;
Brought me to Mytilene. But, now, good sir,
Whither will you have me? Why do you weep? It may be,
You think me an impostor: no, good faith;
I am the daughter to King Pericles,
If good King Pericles be.
Per. Ho, Helicanus!
Hel. Calls my lord?
Per. Thou art a grave and noble counsellor,
Most wise in general: tell me, if thou canst,
What this maid is, or what is like to be,
That thus hath made me weep?
Hel. I know not; but
Here is the regent, sir, of Mytilene
Speaks nobly of her.
Lysimachus. She would never tell
Her parentage; being demanded that,
She would sit still and weep.
Per. O Helicanus, strike me, honour'd sir;
Give me a gash, put me to present pain;
Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me,
O'erbear the shores of my mortality,
And drown me with their sweetness. O, come hither,
Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget;
Thou that wast born at sea, buried at Tarsus,
And found at sea again! O Helicanus,
Down on thy knees, thank the holy gods as loud
As thunder threatens us: this is Marina.
What was thy mother's name? tell me but that,
For truth can never be confirm'd enough
Though doubts did ever sleep.
Mar. First, sir, I pray,
What is your title?

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Per. I am Pericles of Tyre: but tell me now
My drown'd queen's name, as in the rest you said
Thou hast been godlike perfect,
The heir of kingdoms and another like
To Pericles thy father.
Mar. Is it no more to be your daughter than
To say my mother's name was Thaisa?
Thaisa was my mother, who did end
The minute I began.
Per. Now, blessing on thee! rise; thou art my child.
Give me fresh garments. Mine own, Helicanus;
She is not dead at Tarsus, as she should have been,
By savage Cleon: she shall tell thee all;
When thou shalt kneel, and justify in knowledge
She is thy very princess. Who is this?
Hel. Sir, 'tis the governor of Mytilene,
Who, hearing of your melancholy state,
Did come to see you.
Per. I embrace you.
Give me my robes. I am wild in my beholding.
O heavens bless my girl! But, hark, what music?
Tell Helicanus, my Marina, tell him
O'er, point by point, for yet he seems to doubt,
How sure you are my daughter. But, what music?
Hel. My lord, I hear none.
Per. None!
The music of the spheres! List, my Marina.
Lys. It is not good to cross him; give him way.
Per. Rarest sounds! Do ye not hear?
Lys. My lord, I hear. (*Music.*)
Per. Most heavenly music!
It nips me unto listening, and thick slumber
Hangs upon mine eyes; let me rest. (*Sleeps.*)

It is impossible to doubt the hand of the master in this scene, and Marina may fearlessly join the noble circle of Shakespeare's women. The evil-minded Dionyza conforms less to the profound psychological conception we admire in the mature poet. Simple envy of Marina's superiority to her own daughter is a very petty motive when it concerns so foul a deed as the murder of a lovely and innocent being, who has been confided to her by a parent as a pledge of the highest confidence and the truest friendship. A woman capable of resolving suddenly on such a murderous action,

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of giving such an order in cold blood, must have been naturally filled with hate and evil passion. We turn with absolute horror from the heartless hypocrite who, with flattering words and skilfully feigned cheerfulness, lures the harmless confiding victim into the net. Nor can we clearly explain the indulgence extended by the worthy but weak and undecided Cleon to his criminal wife. The two other female characters of the play do not call for extended remark. The daughter of King Antiochus passes through the first scene like a baleful spectre. The mysterious riddle she propounds to her suitors, and to which Pericles finds the terrible answer that betrays the horrible connection between her and her father, thereby calling down the unquenchable wrath of Antiochus, is the starting-point of the play, since Pericles begins his wanderings to escape their fury. They lead him to Pentapolis, where he wins for his wife Thaisa, the daughter of King Simonides. He puts to sea with her after living some time at his father-in-law's court. She gives birth to a daughter during a fierce storm, and is supposed to have died in childbirth. Her body is committed to the waves. But lucky fate drives the chest which contains her to land at Ephesus. Thaisa awakes once more to life. The noble lady, who despairs of ever again meeting husband and child, renounces all worldly joys, and leads a secluded and cloistered life in the Temple of Diana. Through a dream brought about by the goddess, Pericles with his newly discovered daughter comes to the city, and the husband and wife, who had never thought to meet again in this world, recognise each other after their long and painful separation. In blissful delight the sorely tried lady embraces her husband and the daughter, now grown a lovely girl.

In absolute contradiction to the Shakespearian spirit as expressed in his other dramas, is the Epilogue, which, like the numerous prologues that fill the gaps in the action of this play, aided by pantomimic performers, is placed in the

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mouth of the old English poet John Gower. In this Epilogue poetical and pedantic justice is declaimed in a manner nowhere else employed by Shakespeare. Great and eternal truths shine out from every line he wrote, but he never gives them formal application. He shows in the catastrophes of his plays how passion and crime lead to destruction, but he never, abandoning the objective *rôle* of the poet, sits subjectively in judgment. Here rewards and punishments are formally portioned out, and the spectator is called upon to observe how Antiochus and his daughter have been punished for their wickedness; how Cleon and Dionyza have been burned alive in their own palace by their subjects for the intended murder of Marina; how, on the contrary, Pericles with his wife and child, after much suffering, have received great good fortune as the reward of their virtue. If this Epilogue be the work of Shakespeare, we can only explain it in one way, viz., that as the young poet was also part owner of the theatre, in view of the material interest of the house he was obliged to conform to the taste of a public that loved such mechanically poetical morality.

"HENRY VI."

Queen Margaret—Eleanor, Duchess of Gloster—Elizabeth, Queen to Edward IV.

It lies beyond the province of this book, which aims at describing the female characters of Shakespeare, to discuss the important critical questions connected with certain plays of the first period—questions which turn upon doubts as to whether Shakespeare wrote them himself or merely worked over older pieces, and how large a part, in the latter case, may be assigned to him. The question only concerns us in so far as it aids us in judging to what degree the female characters in such plays conform in character and nature

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to those Shakespeare habitually portrayed, or whether they differ from them, and thus offer a point of departure from which to deduce conclusions as to their authorship. We noted in *Titus Andronicus* that the characterisation of Tamora, at once a powerful, ambitious woman and an incautious fool, who blindly falls into the stupid snare laid for her, does not bear the stamp of Shakespearian psychology, while, on the other hand, the lovely Marina in *Pericles* reveals the master's hand in many passages. The most prominent female character in *Henry VI.*, Queen Margaret (of Anjou), furnishes equally interesting observations. It is doubtful whether the work is Shakespeare's, or by an earlier writer, and merely worked over by him. The latter is the most probable conjecture; indeed, it is almost certain. What proportion of the work must be assigned to the poet cannot be established, for the older play is not before us. But at all events, the way in which Shakespeare worked up the female characters, or left them as he found them, helps to justify our previous remark, that the female characters of his first period are, with few exceptions, unlovely, gloomy, eerie creatures. The idiosyncrasies of these female figures does not contradict our conjecture that Shakespeare was influenced in the presentment of his early female characters, whether wholly or partly his own, by a subjective tendency, induced by melancholy personal experiences, from which he only gradually freed himself. All those characters which are the outcome of an independent, calm, and noble method of work, with some exceptions, of which Juliet is one, are to be found in his riper productions. Let us examine the women of *Henry VI.* We have already referred to the hateful, the Maid of Orleans, and have said enough concerning this caricature. But altogether women do not fare well in *Henry VI.* All evil and destructive elements are united in the passionate queen and the Duchess of Gloster. Foremost stands the queen, the Frenchwoman Margaret. Young, beautiful, charming, armed with all the panoply of

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her sex, she comes to England. The king is enchanted by the aspect of "the fairest queen that ever king received," and delighted with her mild and modest words. But the patriot Gloster hears with regret that this pearl has been bought at the price of the conquests of the great Henry V., and further, that "this pearl" is neither genuine nor pure, that the happiness in her love, of which the poor king dreams, is impossible. The fiendish woman knows this well. With perjury on her lips, she enters the house whose spirit of vengeance she will prove. She loves the knightly, ambitious Suffolk, she despises Henry, whose childlike innocence she cannot understand, and whose weakness of character interferes with her high-reaching plans. It is not in her to sacrifice an inclination on the shrine of duty. Hence we see her, on the one hand, carrying on a criminal relation with Suffolk; on the other, becoming a centre of intrigue, and the cup in which all the poison of the ultra-ambitious nobility is collected. Female passion and jealousy hasten the conflict which has long been brooding in the hearts of the men. The meeting of the two passionate women is described with pitiless hardness, entirely free from any touch of modern sentimentality. The demonic figures of antique legend rise before our eyes, and we seem to be listening to Clytemnestra, to Medea. In the terrible and recurring cursing bouts we encounter nature in all her grossness, free from the varnish of good society manners. Here, to justify the poet, we must take into consideration a circumstance true to this day, namely, that women who, at the highest point of their intellectual and moral development, are the equals, nay, often the superiors of men in loving self-sacrifice, when they overstep their protecting moral bounds, go farther than men, who are more capable of self-control. Thus, the quarrel of the two passionate women takes harder and more hateful shapes than even the outrageous fury of the cardinal. Thus, Margaret, after the young and innocent Rutland is

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slain, and she gives to the mourning father, to dry his tears, the handkerchief she had dipped in the boy's blood, seems to us a frightful fury, beside whom Lady Macbeth appears mild.

Margaret's character, nevertheless, merits careful study because of its relation to the above-named literary dispute. The attempt has often been made to prove, from outer and inner evidence, that the three parts of *Henry VI.* were not originally written by Shakespeare, but woven out of two older plays, worked up together. In any case, the three parts of this great Trilogy appear to the careful observer to contain fewer poetical beauties, less true passion, more empty and hollow-sounding pathos, in the long-drawn speeches of the characters, than we find in the other dramas. It is also undeniable that the action lacks the unity found in other plays. These, however irregular and apparently capricious, nearly always show, on careful study, more unity of composition than those ever-renewed scenes of crime and bloodshed, against which the mind revolts, until we lose all interest. But, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the Trilogy, and especially its Second and Third Parts, contain several detached passages in which Shakespeare's master-hand shows with brilliant clearness. It is, therefore, very difficult to decide from internal evidence, and from the poetical form of the Trilogy, as to the authenticity of the work. But the character of Margaret, and the manner in which it is developed and presented, seems to me to contradict the theory of authenticity. She is absolutely unlike Shakespeare's other women,—we do not forget the infinite variety of his female creations, for example, Lady Macbeth and Juliet, Miranda and Portia, and many more,—because the whole creation, the fashion of her presentment, differs from his methods. Certainly, in detached passages there are traces of the master-hand to which Shakespeare has accustomed us, but, as a whole, it is wanting in the great, powerful spirit, in the psychological truth we so admire in

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his female characters. It leaves the impression of having been originally hard and awkward of presentment, into which he threw some high lights here and there. The queen is a powerful and logically developed type, but she is no Shakespearian woman. It is not Shakespeare's way to present to us, as a heroine, a woman who entirely lacks the first quality requisite for such a character, namely, heroism. It is not Shakespeare's way to show us a woman who endures, unyieldingly, the most terrible catastrophes and reverses of fortune, who with unbroken courage resists trials calculated to break the spirit of a strong man, without at the same time granting her personal qualities that make our hearts sympathise with her tireless fight against evil fate. Further, in order to describe this figure, he has set himself in distinct contradiction to the truth of history. Recalling his usual methods, we should have said that he would have made of Margaret of Anjou, the great-hearted queen, such as she appears in history, not merely the false and cunning Frenchwoman endowed with every trait of rough boorishness and corruption, who wakes no sentiment save abhorrence. Chronicles assure us that Queen Margaret was distinguished among women for beauty, intellect, and sagacity, but that her whole character was rather masculine than feminine, and that Henry's friends fell away from him after his marriage. The great families were divided among themselves, the people rose against their lawful king, a terrible civil war broke out. The blood of thousands flowed in sanguinary battles. In the end the king was dethroned, his son murdered, and the queen banished, sent back "with even as much pain and suffering as she had come with splendour and triumph." The delineation of Margaret's character in the play seems to touch history at this point, but without the depth and art in its development we are wont to admire in Shakespeare. The Margaret of the play is adorned with all the charms of her sex, armed with all its weapons; she is bold, cunning, resolute in action, stead-

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fast in endurance, but false, haughty, capable of every form of dissimulation, vindictive, furious in temper. All her womanliness has vanished in the frightful bloody battles for the maintenance of her power. Only maternal love has remained as its last trace. Detached scenes rise to poetical beauty, but from the character of Margaret as a whole every atom of poetry has disappeared. We need but mention the scene where, forgetting her dignity as a queen, as woman, she boxes the Duchess of Gloster on the ear. Very beautiful, and characteristic, at the same time, of the period and the personage, is the scene in which she blames with bitter scorn the king's weakness, complains in angry railing of the influence of the great and haughty nobles, and gives passionate expression to her rage against, and jealousy of, the Duchess of Gloster:

> Not all these lords do vex me half so much
> As that proud dame, the Lord Protector's wife.
> She sweeps it through the court with troops of ladies,
> More like an empress than Duke Humphrey's wife:
> Strangers in court do take her for the queen:
> She bears a duke's revenues on her back,
> And in her heart she scorns our poverty:
> Shall I not live to be avenged on her?
> Contemptuous base-born callet as she is,
> She vaunted 'mongst her minions t'other day,
> The very train of her worst wearing gown
> Was better worth than all my father's lands,
> Till Suffolk gave two dukedoms for his daughter.
>
> *Second Part of Henry VI.*, act i. scene 3.

She was mixed up in all the intrigues which the nobles hatched against the good Duke of Gloster, the upright patriot. She knew well that he cared only for the welfare and greatness of England, that he did not approve of the king's marriage with a princess who had neither lands nor money, and whose price was the two provinces conquered by Henry V. Hence she looks upon him as her mortal enemy. After his shameful murder she succeeds, with

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skilful and well-calculated cunning, in turning suspicion from herself, and in confusing the good king's mind with a dizzy whirl of words that conceal the truth. When the king speaks to the Duke of Suffolk, who has told him of the demise of Gloster with a feigned astonishment, harsh words that show he deems him guilty of this sudden death, she defends Suffolk and herself with characteristic but shocking hypocrisy:

> Why do you rate my Lord of Suffolk thus?
> Although the Duke was enemy to him,
> Yet he, most Christian-like, laments his death:
> And for myself, foe as he was to me,
> Might liquid tears or heart-offending groans,
> Or blood-consuming sighs recall his life,
> I would be blind with weeping, sick with groans,
> Look pale as primrose with blood-drinking sighs,
> And all to have the noble Duke alive.
> What know I how the world may deem of me?
> For it is known we were but hollow friends:
> It may be judged I made the Duke away;
> So shall my name with slander's tongue be wounded,
> And princes' courts be fill'd with my reproach.
> This get I by his death; ay me, unhappy!
> To be a queen and crown'd with infamy!

When King Henry breaks out into a cry of woe for his murdered uncle, she overwhelms him with the above-mentioned verbal torrent, which contains the most unregal, the most repulsive dissimulation.

> Be woe for me, more wretched than he is.
> What, dost thou turn away and hide thy face?
> I am no loathsome leper; look on me.
> What! art thou, like the adder, waxen deaf?
> Be poisonous too, and kill thy forlorn queen.
> Is all thy comfort shut in Gloster's tomb?
> Why, then, dame Margaret was ne'er thy joy:
> Erect his statua and worship it,
> And make my image but an alehouse sign.
> Was I for this nigh wreck'd upon the sea,
> And twice by awkward wind from England's bank

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Drove back again unto my native clime?
What boded this, but well-forewarning wind
Did seem to say, 'Seek not a scorpion's nest,
Nor set no footing on this unkind shore?'
What did I then, but cursed the gentle gusts
And he that loosed them forth their brazen caves;
And bid them blow towards England's blessed shore,
Or turn our stern upon a dreadful rock?
Yet Æolus would not be a murderer,
But left that hateful office unto thee:
The pretty-vaulting sea refused to drown me;
Knowing that thou wouldst have me drown'd on shore,
With tears as salt as sea, through thy unkindness:
The splitting rocks cower'd in the sinking sands,
And would not dash me with their ragged sides,
Because thy flinty heart, more hard than they,
Might in thy palace perish Margaret.
As far as I could ken thy chalky cliffs,
When from thy shore the tempest beat us back,
I stood upon the hatches in the storm,
And when the dusky sky began to rob
My earnest-gaping sight of thy land's view,
I took a costly jewel from my neck,
A heart it was, bound in with diamonds,
And threw it towards thy land: the sea received it
And so I wish'd thy body might my heart:
And even with this I lost fair England's view
And bid mine eyes be packing with my heart
And call'd them blind and dusky spectacles
For losing ken of Albion's wished coast.
How often have I tempted Suffolk's tongue,
The agent of thy foul inconstancy
To sit and witch me, as Ascanius did
When he to madding Dido would unfold
His father's acts commenced in burning Troy!
Am I not witch'd like her? or thou not false like him?
Ay me, I can no more! Die, Margaret!
For Henry weeps that thou dost live so long.

Second Part of Henry VI., act iii. scene 2.

While this scene is so repulsive, the parting scene between Suffolk and Margaret is touching and truly Shakespearian. The weak king, incapable of ruling, has been driven for once, by an uprising of the populace, furious at the murder of the good Duke of Gloster, to an act of energy, and has spoken a sentence of banishment against Suffolk.

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Let me quote first the womanly curse, full of rage against the king's sentence:

> Mischance and sorrow go along with you!
> Heart's discontent and sour affliction
> Be playfellows to keep you company!
> There's two of you; the devil make a third!
> And threefold vengeance tend upon your steps!
> *Second Part of Henry VI.*, act iii. scene 2.

When, at Suffolk's prayer, that she will cease from cursing, she accuses herself of cowardice and womanly softness of heart, "that she has not spirit to curse her enemies."

When Suffolk then pours forth curses with unbridled fury, even she grows alarmed at the rage she has conjured up, and turns to her beloved with sorrow, tears, and infinite tenderness:

> Give me thy hand,
> That I may dew it with my mournful tears;
> Nor let the rain of heaven wet this place,
> To wash away my woful monuments.
> O, could this kiss be printed in thy hand,
> That thou mightst think upon these by the seal,
> Through whom a thousand sighs are breathed for thee!
> So, get thee gone, that I may know my grief;
> 'Tis but surmised whilst thou art standing by,
> As one that surfeits thinking on a want.
> I will repeal thee, or, be well assured,
> Adventure to be banished myself:
> And banished I am, if but from thee.
> Go; speak not to me; even now be gone.—
> O, go not yet! Even thus two friends condemn'd
> Embrace and kiss and take ten thousand leaves,
> Loather a thousand times to part than die.
> Yet now farewell; and farewell life with thee!
> *Second Part of Henry VI.*, act iii. scene 2.

Meantime arrives the news of the dangerous illness of another accomplice in Gloster's murder, the Cardinal of Winchester, and Margaret breaks into lamentations over this new blow. But she straightway reproaches herself for thinking at such a moment of anything but her grief at parting with Suffolk:

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But wherefore grieve I at an hour's poor loss,
Omitting Suffolk's exile, my soul's treasure?
Why only, Suffolk, mourn I not for thee,
And with the southern clouds contend in tears,
Theirs for the earth's increase, mine for my sorrows?
Now get thee hence: the king, thou know'st, is coming;
If thou be found by me, thou art but dead.

Second Part of Henry VI., act iii. scene 2.

Of high poetic beauty are the last parting words exchanged between the guilty lovers:

Suf. If I depart from thee, I cannot live;
And in thy sight to die, what were it else
But like a pleasant slumber in thy lap?
Here could I breathe my soul into the air,
As mild and gentle as the cradle-babe
Dying with mother's dug between its lips:
Where, from thy sight, I should be raging mad
And cry out for thee to close up mine eyes,
To have thee with thy lips to stop my mouth;
So shouldst thou either turn my flying soul,
Or I should breathe it so into thy body,
And then it lived in sweet Elysium.
To die by thee were but to die in jest;
From thee to die were torture more than death:
O, let me stay, befall what may befall!
Queen. Away! though parting be a fretful corrosive,
It is applied to a deathful wound.
To France, sweet Suffolk: let me hear from thee;
For wheresoe'er thou art in this world's globe,
I'll have an Iris that shall find thee out.
Suf. I go.
Queen. And take my heart with thee.
Suf. A jewel, lock'd into the wofull'st cask
That ever did contain a thing of worth.
Even as a splitted bark, so sunder we;
This way fall I to death.
Queen. This way for me.

Second Part of Henry VI., act iii. scene 2.

In the third part of the Trilogy, Margaret, engaged in fierce warfare for her husband's throne, shows herself in a more gracious and worthy aspect. The weak King Henry VI., by the Treaty of London, has renounced, as the price of peaceful and unmolested enjoyment of the throne during

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his lifetime, the right of his son to the succession, and has recognised Richard, Duke of York, the head of the rival house, as his heir. In just and righteous wrath, in finely balanced phrases, Margaret lifts up her voice against this shameful abdication. To the king's advice that she should patiently bear the inevitable, she answers:

> Who can be patient in such extremes?
> Ah, wretched man! would I had died a maid,
> And never seen thee, never borne thee son,
> Seeing thou hast proved so unnatural a father!
> Hath he deserved to lose his birthright thus?
> Hadst thou but loved him half so well as I,
> Or felt that pain which I did for him once,
> Or nourish'd him as I did with my blood,
> Thou wouldst have left thy dearest heart-blood there,
> Rather than have made that savage duke thine heir,
> And disinherited thine only son.
>
> *Third Part of Henry VI.*, act i. scene 1.

Here we feel an intimate sympathy for the queen and mother who intelligently bears witness to her son's rights. We also respect the energy with which she conducts this war for the right, which leads to her brilliant victory over the pretender York.

But unfortunately sympathy must again give way to disgust and horror. After her victory in battle, she becomes a fury, a raging Medusa. She torments the Duke of York with vindictive cruelty and grim rage. With a brutality which would seem unnatural in a man, and still more so in a woman, she throws him the handkerchief she has dipped in the blood of his lovely little boy, Rutland, to dry his tears. With bitter scorn she taunts with insatiable ambition the man who struggled for the crown, a man who has fallen into such misery that even his deadly foes cannot resist shedding tears of pity at the sight. She, nevertheless, remains unmoved, the thought of what she has undergone dries her tears. With hellish triumph, after a sword-stroke has given the martyred Duke

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of York his death-wound, in a fit of rage, doubly frightful in a woman, she stabs the dying man with a dagger, and then orders that his head be placed over the gate of York that he may overlook his own city. But avenging Fortune quickly overtakes her. The battle of Towton, won by the son of the murdered Duke, ends all her hopes after a short triumph. Her army is completely routed, her husband falls into the victor's hands. Edward, the eldest son of the Duke of York, ascends the throne of England as Edward IV., and Margaret and her son become fugitives, seeking help at the court of the French king, Louis XI. Margaret confirms the oft-renewed experience that many who show hateful and despicable qualities in prosperity present a much better side in adversity. So here, too, we cannot refuse our sympathy to the woman who in the pride of her success raged like a fury. By her modest demeanour when she entreats the King of France to aid her in supporting the rights of her son she wins our pity and respect. We see with regret that she turns to a man incapable of acting from an unselfish or noble motive. Caring only for his own interest, in reply to her eloquent entreaties for aid, he bestows on her nothing but empty phrases and worthless grounds of consolation. How little hope there is that Louis will keep his promise to interfere effectually in Margaret's behalf is seen when the Earl of Warwick appears as ambassador from Edward, then seated firmly on the throne of England. In the name of his king he offers the French monarch his alliance and sues in Edward's name for the hand of his sister Bona. In vain does Margaret strive in moving phrases to avert this terrible blow. It seems but justice that she, who, when she held power in her own hands, misused it, treading under foot every divine and human law, should now in her need invoke in vain the Divine law and heavenly justice which in time treads all evil under foot. King Louis expresses himself as ready to enter into the proposed alliance, and promises the King of England the hand of his

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sister Bona, whose consent was readily won. All the hopes of the hapless Margaret seem for ever destroyed. But her star appears to rise and glow once more ere it sinks into hopeless darkness. One of those sudden unexpected turns, of which the life of this woman is so full, lift her once more from the depth of misfortune and place her at the highest point of hope. Letters arrive from the king for Margaret and for Warwick, relating an extraordinary event. King Edward, while suing earnestly through his ambassador for the hand of the French princess, has been seized with a frantic passion for a certain Lady Grey, who will not sell her virtue at a lower price than marriage. Having altogether lost his head, he espouses her, and thus mortally offends the French king, and, what is perhaps even more fatal, offends the mighty Warwick, the king-maker, who can throw so heavy a weight into the scale. Margaret exults; Louis is beside himself with anger at the insult offered to his sister; Warwick, in consequence of Edward's shameful treatment, casts him off with burning words, and swears that he will devote all his power and intellect to restoring to Margaret's son his birthright, setting him on the English throne. As a proof of confidence, he proposes to betroth the Prince of Wales with his daughter, while Louis declares himself ready to support the undertaking with the whole power of the French army. Margaret forgives her former enemy, and accords her consent to the suggested engagement. The war which follows at first promises success to the Red Rose of Lancaster, but, after a brilliant passing gleam, its sun is suddenly extinguished and for ever. Warwick, who preceded with a section of the army, freed Henry from prison and set him up again as king.* But the Yorkists return victorious to London, and once more consign the poor weak monarch to the Tower, whence only a violent death released him. Warwick is defeated and slain at the battle of Barnet.

* King Edward was also taken prisoner, but soon freed by his brothers.

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Margaret lands with a second army on English soil. She finds the glowing hopes she had set on Warwick annihilated. But in adversity this woman rises to an astonishing height. Her courage is unbroken, and, with glowing and inspiring words that breathe the true Shakespearian spirit, she seeks to awaken the sunken confidence of her followers, and calls upon them resolutely to dare once more the fight for the highest of prizes:

Great lords, wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss,
But cheerly seek how to redress their harms.
What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding-anchor lost,
And half our sailors swallow'd in the flood?
Yet lives our pilot still. Is't meet that he
Should leave the helm and like a fearful lad
With tearful eyes add water to the sea
And give more strength to that which hath too much,
Whiles, in his moan, the ship splits on the rock,
Which industry and courage might have saved?
Ah, what a shame! ah, what a fault were this!
Say Warwick was our anchor; what of that?
And Montague our topmast; what of him?
Our slaughter'd friends the tackles; what of these?
Why, is not Oxford here another anchor?
And Somerset another goodly mast?
The friends of France our shrouds and tacklings?
And, though unskilful, why not Ned and I
For once allow'd the skilful pilot's charge?
We will not from the helm to sit and weep,
But keep our course, though the rough wind say no,
From shelves and rocks that threaten us with wreck.
As good to chide the waves as speak them fair.
And what is Edward but a ruthless sea?
What Clarence but a quicksand of deceit?
And Richard but a ragged fatal rock?
All these the enemies to our poor bark.
Say you can swim; alas, 'tis but a while!
Tread on the sand; why, there you quickly sink:
Bestride the rock; the tide will wash you off,
Or else you famish; that's a threefold death.
This speak I, lords, to let you understand,
If case some one of you would fly from us,
That there's no hoped-for mercy with the brothers

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More than with ruthless waves, with sands and rocks.
Why, courage then! what cannot be avoided
'Twere childish weakness to lament or fear.
Third Part of Henry VI., act v. scene 5.

But Heaven does not smile on her heroism. Near Tewkesbury her army is utterly defeated by the brothers of the House of York, and she and her son taken prisoners. Before her very eyes this only and beloved son is slain by the cruel and merciless foe. At this moment we forget all our dislike of Margaret; we forget the unfaithful spouse, the cruel enemy; we see in her only the despairing mother, who beholds her only happiness, her only hope in life, irrevocably destroyed.

We bend humbly before the Almighty power that brings good fruit from evil seed, but we are shaken to the depths of our hearts by the lament of the mother who clasps the corpse of her son, and we do not sit in judgment upon her for the frightful curses and ill wishes she pours out upon her child's ruthless murderers, curses but too terribly fulfilled. Nor in this passage either can the master-hand of Shakespeare be mistaken:

O Ned, sweet Ned! speak to thy mother, boy!
Canst thou not speak? O traitors! murderers!
They that stabb'd Cæsar shed no blood at all,*
Did not offend, nor were not worthy blame,
If this foul deed were by to equal it;
He was a man; this, in respect, a child:
And men ne'er spend their fury on a child.
What's worse than murderer, that I may name it?
No, no, my heart will burst, an if I speak;
And I will speak, that so my heart may burst.
Butchers and villains! bloody cannibals!
How sweet a plant have you untimely cropp'd!

* "*Shed no blood at all.*" When we say that this passage has Shakespeare's mark, we cannot deny that it is hardly appropriate to put into the mouth of the despairing mother, at the moment of her deepest grief, so cold an historical allusion.

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You have no children, butchers! if you had,
The thought of them would have stirr'd up remorse:
But if you ever chance to have a child,
Look in his youth to have him so cut off
As, deathsmen, you have rid this sweet young prince!

Third Part of Henry VI., act v. scene 5.

In order not to have to hark back to Queen Margaret when we examine the female characters in *Richard III.*, the tragedy which closes the history of the frightful wars between the Houses of York and Lancaster, we will refer here to her part in that play. We saw her ascend the throne in the brightness of her young beauty. We saw her painfully as queen and wife. We were admiring witnesses of her heroism in the struggle to right her son. We turned from her with horror, as, with a cruelty doubly hateful in a woman, she abused her momentary triumph. We wept with her over the grave of her happiness and the corpse of her only child. In *Richard III.* we see her wandering about the palace where her enemies rule, a gloomy, weird, threatening spectre, only tolerated because of her helplessness and utter want of power to injure. With demoniacal enjoyment of suffering she watches the welcome drama, how the race which has flung her into the deepest misery is in suicidal rage destroying itself. Nothing human is left in her aspect, she stands before us an implacable unforgiving goddess of revenge, hate, and destruction. She is only introduced in two scenes. In the first she appears a witness of the events that took place around King Edward's sick-bed. Richard of Gloster is preparing the sanguinary deed that shall clear his way to the throne across the corpses of his whole race. He has succeeded in dividing his brother Clarence from the king; he has already planned the murder which is to overtake Clarence in the Tower, where the jealousy of the king, fomented by himself, has sent him, thus removing him from his path. With ill-concealed enmity he meets the queen*

* Elizabeth, queen of Edward IV., and her son by her first husband.

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and her relations, accusing them with shameless hypocrisy of creating dissension between the king and the Duke of Clarence. Phrases of bitter hate are exchanged. Hereupon Margaret enters. She has listened with fiendish satisfaction to these expressions of loathing between the detested destroyers of her happiness. From the depths of a heart overflowing with gall she invokes on them this awful curse, in tones that sound no longer human, but resemble those of a devil:

> Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?
> Why, then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!
> If not by war, by surfeit die your king,
> As ours by murder, to make him a king!
> Edward thy son, which now is Prince of Wales,
> For Edward my son, which was Prince of Wales,
> Die in his youth by like untimely violence!
> Thyself a queen, for me that was a queen,
> Outlive thy glory, like my wretched self!
> Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's loss;
> And see another, as I see thee now,
> Deck'd in thy rights, as thou art stall'd in mine!
> Long die thy happy days before thy death;
> And, after many lengthen'd hours of grief,
> Die neither mother, wife, nor England's queen!
> Rivers and Dorset, you were standers by,
> And so wast thou, Lord Hastings, when my son
> Was stabb'd with bloody daggers; God, I pray him,
> That none of you may live your natural age,
> But by some unlook'd accident cut off!
>
> *Richard III.*, act i. scene 3.

All these imprecations are literally fulfilled. Queen Elizabeth survives her husband and lovely boys. She herself dies neither mother, wife, nor queen. All the nobles present, thanks to Richard III., suffer a bloody death upon the scaffold. The worst curses, the most frightful epithets, she heaps on Gloster, whose character she reads with an unerring glance sharpened by misery. She foresees plainly that he will undertake and fulfil the task of avenging her terribly upon her enemies, who are

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his own relations. She warns the queen with phrases full of a presentiment all too soon fulfilled:

> Poor painted queen, vain flourish of my fortune!
> Why strew'st thou sugar on that bottled spider,
> Whose deadly web ensnareth thee about?
> Fool, fool! thou whet'st a knife to kill thyself.
> The time will come when thou shalt wish for me
> To help thee curse that poisonous bunch-back'd toad.
>
> *Richard III.*, act i. scene 3.

In the second scene in which the poet brings this demon woman before us, the evils have been accomplished. Richard of Gloster has ascended the throne through a sea of blood. The frightful curse launched by Margaret against the queen, Elizabeth, is completely fulfilled; she is a widow; her beloved children have fallen into the hands of the bloody Richard; the murderer has set the crown on his own head; she herself, like Margaret, has fallen from her brilliant estate into the deepest abyss of misery. With devilish pleasure Margaret watches the descent of the judgment she has prophesied. Her thirst for vengeance is sated, and she resolves to await from afar, in France, whither she means to go, the further march of destruction. She vanishes from our ken like a spectre, after she has once again reminded all present in sharp phrases of their misery, unmoved by the frightful fate of the unhappy Elizabeth, of the yet unhappier mother who gave birth to the monster that has destroyed his own family to minister to his criminal ambition. When Elizabeth shudderingly reminds her that she had prophesied that the time would come when she would invoke her aid to curse the murderer of her sons, she answers grimly and pitilessly:

> I call'd thee then vain flourish of my fortune;
> I call'd thee then poor shadow, painted queen;
> The presentation of but what I was;
> The flattering index of a direful pageant;
> One heaved a-high, to be hurl'd down below;
> A mother only mock'd with two sweet babes;
> A dream of what thou wert, a breath, a bubble,

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A sign of dignity, a garish flag,
To be the aim of every dangerous shot;
A queen in jest, only to fill the scene.
Where is thy husband now? where be thy brothers?
Where are thy children? wherein dost thou joy?
Who sues to thee, and cries 'God save the queen?'
Where be the bending peers that flatter'd thee?
Where be the thronging troops that follow'd thee?
Decline all this, and see what now thou art:
For happy wife, a most distressed widow;
For joyful mother, one that wails the name;
For queen, a very caitiff crown'd with care;
For one being sued to, one that humbly sues;
For one that scorn'd at me, now scorn'd of me;
For one being fear'd of all, now fearing one;
For one commanding all, obey'd of none.
Thus hath the course of justice wheel'd about,
And left thee but a very prey to time:
Having no more but thought of what thou wert,
To torture thee the more, being what thou art.
Thou didst usurp my place, and dost thou not
Usurp the just proportion of my sorrow?
Now thy proud neck bears half my burthen'd yoke;
From which even here I slip my weary neck,
And leave the burthen of it all on thee.
Farewell, York's wife, and queen of sad mischance:
These English woes will make me smile in France.

Richard III., act iv. scene 4.

In the Second Part of *Henry VI.* another passionate woman appears, who is set against the queen—Eleanor, the wife of the Protector of England, the good Duke of Gloster. She is full of high-reaching, masculine ambition, and she seeks, with glowing eloquence, to plant the same ambition in her husband's heart. In his touching and honourable loyalty he thinks only of the welfare of England and of her king; she strives to induce him to stretch forth his hand to grasp the golden circlet. As we listen to her we are reminded of Lady Macbeth; although she does not actually incite her husband to murder, still she seeks by her talk to spur him on, and begs him never to rest until the glory-beaming circle lies upon his own brow. She interprets a dream which he considers unlucky as prophetic

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of high fortune, and relates a dream of her own which predicts for her queenly power:

> Methought I sat in seat of majesty
> In the cathedral church of Westminster,
> And in that chair where kings and queens are crown'd,
> Where Henry and dame Margaret kneel'd to me,
> And on my head did set the diadem.
>
> *Second Part of Henry VI.*, act i. scene 2.

But she does not find in her husband such favourable soil as Macbeth offered to his terrible wife. He warns her seriously, in words that are almost harsh, against her ambitious dream, which, as he tells her, will bring her "from top of honour to disgrace's feet." It is touching to note how the intimately tender relation between this pair, so different in character, comes out in the good-naturedly playful way in which the wife takes her husband's reproof, and in the good-humoured speech by which he endeavours to atone for his harshness. "Nay, be not angry, I am pleased again." But her soliloquy shows that her husband's words have been fruitless, and that she is resolved to follow the path of ambition, shrinking from no means of pursuing the shining prize at which she aims. She would not hesitate "to remove those tedious stumbling-blocks, and smooth her way upon their headless necks." If, however, her ambition and her fearless energy recall Lady Macbeth, she differs from her by one great weakness. Lady Macbeth is entirely self-sufficing. She stands on her own feet, she creates her evil resolutions out of her own inner nature, out of the wild passion which fills her own breast. She uses her husband's superstition and the influence exerted on him by the prophecy of the witches only to strengthen him in his evil resolution. She herself knows no superstition. But the Duchess of Gloster has fallen a prey to superstition, she allows herself to be led astray by magic spells, conjurations of devils, and such like absurdities, which she calls in aid of her object, and so falls into the hands of a low pack of im-

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postors, who drag her to destruction. It is easy to imagine the effect produced upon such a character when the queen she already hates, and who has taken her place, boxes her ears before the whole court. This deadly insult throws her into an impotent fury, to which she gives vent in ugly words unworthy of a noble lady. In her passion she runs blindly into the snare which the Protector's enemies have laid for her. In her they strike him, and through her degradation, which follows on the discovery that she has conspired against the king's life by supernatural means, they endeavour to make his high position untenable. They are in league with the uncanny wretches who have woven their nets about the Duchess. She is surprised with the whole band during their unholy incantations, captured and brought to trial. The king himself pronounces her terrible sentence:

> You, madam, for you are more nobly born,
> Despoiled of your honour in your life,
> Shall, after three days' open penance done,
> Live in your country here in banishment.
>
> *Second Part of Henry VI.*, act ii. scene 3.

Her husband is deprived by the king of the Protectorate in the most wounding manner. But this man, far too gentle and noble for his time and surroundings, is not to be moved by all the degradation inflicted upon him and his wife from his loyalty and obedience to his sovereign and the law. He rejects the offer of his servants to liberate his wife, who "in a white sheet with papers pinned upon her back, her feet bare and a taper burning in her hand," is led through the streets by the sheriff. Nor will he permit any revolt against the execution of the king's sentence. The antithesis between the character of husband and wife comes to light once more with great sharpness in this scene. His heart is breaking with grief at seeing his beloved wife in this shameful position, so cruelly opposed to her high-reaching aims, to the brilliant place to which she is accustomed. He expresses his tender feelings in touching words, which go

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straight to the heart. He exhorts his unhappy consort to bear her evil fortune with calmness and resignation. But she knows nothing of calm or patience, nothing of gentle words. She reproaches him that he who once ruled England can look quietly upon her humiliation. He is simple-minded enough to believe that his enemies, however numerous they be, cannot harm him so long as he is honest, true, and innocent. She sees further; she knows well that her husband's enemies trouble themselves little about his innocence; that they are resolved to destroy the honourable man whose straightforwardness stands in the way of their ambitious plans. With bitter, cutting words she bids him "Be mild, and blush not at her shame. Stir not at nothing, till the axe of death hang over him, as sure it shortly will." Only once a gentle feeling seems to affect her, as Gloster, overpowered by grief, suddenly departs from her without a farewell. Then, overcome with the consciousness that the shame which has this day fallen on her will never be lifted, and that her "joy is death—death, at whose name she oft has been afeared, because she wished this world's eternity," she gives herself up to her keeper, and suffers herself to be led to prison, where she now longs to hide her humiliation for ever from the eyes of the world.

Queen Elizabeth, the spouse of King Edward IV., is first introduced to us in a scene in which, as Lady Grey, she presents herself before the king with a petition for the restoration to herself and sons of her husband's property. He had fallen fighting for the House of York in a lost battle, and the victorious Lancastrians had captured all his possessions. The king, whose duty it would have been to grant this petition immediately and unconditionally, is so carried away by the charms of the young widow, that he is ignoble enough to make his consent dependent upon her acceding to his unholy wishes. But the beautiful widow repulses his advances, either because she is really immovable in

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her modesty and virtue, and will not yield to dishonour even if it comes in the embrace of a king, or else because, with feminine intuition, she reads the character of the sensual monarch, and sees that she may set the highest of all prices upon her love. She actually succeeds by her beauty and tact in leading him to such a pitch of passionate desire, that, seeing he can attain his end in no other way, he resolves to make Elizabeth his queen, without reflecting that in so doing he is actually endangering his throne. The queen pays a high price for her exaltation. She soon perceives that she has awakened the enmity of the king's brothers, partly because they look upon this marriage as an unworthy alliance, partly because they dread with reason the results of the breach of faith with France and of the defection of the mighty Earl of Warwick, a terrible misfortune for the House of York. The enmity lasts until the king's death. Even in the heyday of her splendour, when she has procured for her brothers and sons by her first marriage the highest marks of royal favour, she has to pass many sad and bitter moments. This is especially the case after the king has fallen into his last illness, culminating after Edward's death in the catastrophe brought about by Richard of Gloster, which destroys her and her happiness in one fell swoop. But we can better continue the examination of this character when we reach the tragedy of *Richard III.* It is not needful that we should complete it here, as in the case of Queen Margaret. Elizabeth's character stands in relation to another Shakespearian woman, Anne, queen of Richard III., and must be again discussed.

"THE COMEDY OF ERRORS"

Adriana—Luciana

In the second scene of the third act of *The Comedy of Errors*, the slave Dromio of Syracuse playfully describes

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to his master, under the figure of a globe, to which he likens her form, a fat cook whom he finds in the house of Antipholus of Ephesus, who taking him for his twin brother, Dromio of Ephesus, long her fellow-slave, pursues him with her attentions. In this round world he pretends to be able to find different countries of Europe. His master, taking up his joking tone, asks him where lie certain lands. He asks for France; Dromio answers, "In her forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her hair." In this way Shakespeare plainly alludes to the French civil war and religious war against Henry IV. at the end of the sixteenth century. This fixes the play as belonging beyond question to those of Shakespeare's first period. *The Comedy of Errors* is founded, as is well known, upon the *Menechmae* of the Roman comic author Plautus, of which Shakespeare must have had before him the translation. But the English dramatist has made the misunderstandings and changes which arise from the exact resemblance of the twin brothers much more pointed than his Roman model. Of course the improbability of the piece becomes greater on this account, and Shakespeare has not even attempted in any way to palliate this, but gives rein to a fantastic invention that appears impossible to a sober mind. Plautus only introduces one pair of twins, who are so much alike as to be mistaken for each other, but who are themselves unconscious of this resemblance. One of them, further, does not know that he bears the same name as the other. That these brothers, who are exactly alike, should also have a couple of slaves who are also twin brothers and also exactly alike, that these two pairs of twins, who have never met since their birth, should be dressed exactly alike, may be incredible. Further, that Antipholus of Syracuse, who knows he has a twin brother exactly resembling him called by the same name, should never come upon his track, while every one in Ephesus greets him as an old acquaintance, reaches the highest point of improbability. But, while

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Shakespeare on the one hand permits himself these utter absurdities and irregularities, plainly arriving at producing a farce addressed frankly to the risible muscles of his spectators, on the other, the action hinges upon a serious, nay, a tragic situation. The cities of Ephesus and Syracuse are divided by a long and deadly feud. It is forbidden to any Syracusan, on pain of death, to be seen in Ephesus. An old man named Ægeon, who has been parted by strange chance from his two sons, has broken this law, of which he was unaware, and is in imminent danger of his life. He relates his wonderful history, how he lived happily in Syracuse, where he was engaged in business, in which he was ever increasingly successful, and was married to a beloved wife, with whom he lived in peace and comfort. Business relations forced him to make a voyage to Epidaurus, whither his wife, longing to be with him, soon followed him, although she was near her confinement. Here she safely bore him twin sons, so like each other that they "could not be distinguished but by names." In the same night, at the same inn, another woman also gave birth to twins, resembling each other exactly, whom Ægeon bought of her, as she was very poor, in order to make them attendants for his sons. At the repeated request of his wife he consented, though unwillingly, for he had had presentiments, to return to Syracuse with her and the children. A frightful storm overtook them, and forced them to leave the ship. Bound to a mast, they committed themselves to the waves. The fragile support was broken. He saw his wife, one son, and one of the twin slaves taken on board a vessel, while he, with the other two boys, was saved by another ship and brought safely home. After eighteen years the boy who was saved with his father becomes curious about his brother, and, anxious to see him, sets out with the twin slave, who has remained with him, in search of the other twin brothers. As he does not return, Ægeon sets out to look for him and has been seeking him for five years. In this quest

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he comes to Ephesus, where so terrible a fate threatens him. In this same Ephesus his son whom he lost in the shipwreck has lived for some time. He is a well-to-do burgher and is married. His wife, Adriana, and her sister, Luciana, are two female figures worthy of attention. I have related the serious background of this play upon which the mad confusion which forms its secondary action follows strangely, at more length than would seem appropriate to a work dealing only with Shakespeare's women. My reason for so doing is that I may not be censured for discussing seriously the two female characters in this play, and for deducing from them conclusions as to the views and life-history of the author. Who, it might be asked, can trace any psychological or reasonable development of character through such a mad farce as this, or pay it enough attention to found any conclusion upon it? It was needful to show that a serious kernel underlies this work, and that hence the characters the author brings before us can be taken seriously. Here, too, Shakespeare, after his favourite wont, has brought together two female types in contrast with each other. Adriana, the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, is in complete agreement with the sketch we have already given of the women of Shakespeare's first period. In spite of her youth, beauty, and charm, she possesses many unamiable traits, ill-calculated to conduce to a peaceful or happy marriage. Luciana, her sister, is more attractive. The conversation of the two, at once reveals their different temperaments. It is dinner-time. Antipholus has not come home, the impatient Adriana has already sent the slave Dromio out in search of him, but neither of them has returned. She is beside herself with anger and impatience. Luciana, more reasonable, tries to persuade her that he has been detained by some unobjectionable cause, an invitation, perhaps, which he has not been able to refuse. But Adriana will not listen. She rages, because, as she says, the men have more liberty than their wives. They do things which if their

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wives did them they would take right ill. Luciana, a gentle girl, replies to her sister that men, who rule over the whole creation, "are masters to their females and their lords," hence, on their side, the women's will should "attend on their accords." But Adriana is impatient of such a yoke; true to her nature, through which she torments herself and her surroundings, she exaggerates the offence her husband has committed, which she says her sister only bears with patience because she is not—

> Burthen'd with like weight of pain,
> Thou, that hast no unkind mate to grieve thee,
> With urging helpless patience would'st relieve me,
> But if thou live to see like right bereft,
> This fool-begged patience in thee will be left.

When the slave Dromio, who has met the false Antipholus, and been beaten by him, returns with the news that his master, when bidden to come home to dinner with his wife, has answered that he knows nothing of either wife or house, Adriana's fury knows no bounds. She drives the slave out again to search for his master. Her whole attitude is painted in Luciana's words—"Fie! how impatience lowereth in your face!" In the true spirit of self-tormenting jealousy, she paints everything in the worst colours. She says that "his company must do his minions grace, while she at home starves for a merry look." She asks bitterly, "Has homely age the alluring beauty took from my poor cheek?" Then she says, "He hath wasted it. Are my discourses dull, barren my wit? Unkindness blunts it more than marble hard." "Do their gay vestures his affections bate? That's not my fault: he's master of my state." "He is the ground of her defeatures. What ruins are in her that can be found by him not ruined? A sunny look of his would soon repair" her lost charm. She likens him at last to an "unruly deer that breaks the pale and feeds from home." When we read Adriana's speeches, we cannot wonder that Antipholus of

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Ephesus, a pleasure-loving young gentleman, as we see later on, often seeks his pleasure away from home. Such a woman, be she never so fair and charming, is not fitted to chain a man to the domestic hearth. On the contrary, she turns his home into a hell by her cross and peevish jealousy, which he avoids as often and as long as he can, seeking outside the peace and quiet his wife will not permit him to enjoy. Adriana has not yet done railing at her husband. She stops an instant for breath. Her sister takes the opportunity to warn her against "self-arming jealousy." She breaks out again. Only "unfeeling fools" can bear such wrongs; she "knows his eye doth homage other where." Then she remembers that "he promised her a chain," and wishes that "that were all he would detain":

> I see the jewel best enamelled
> Will lose his beauty; yet the gold bides still,
> That others touch, and often touching will
> Wear gold; and no man that hath a name,
> By falsehood and corruption doth it shame.
> Since that my beauty cannot please his eye,
> I'll weep what's left away, and weeping die.
>
> *The Comedy of Errors*, act ii. scene i.

It seems almost like a cruel irony of Fate when this woman, who torments her husband and herself with exaggerated and fantastic jealousy, unwittingly gives him cause to be seriously jealous. Owing to the mad *imbroglio* of the play, his own door is shut against him, while his wife dines with another man. Adriana's rage and jealousy reach their highest point when Luciana relates to her sister how Antipholus of Syracuse, who has been brought into his brother's house by mistake, has made fierce love to her. Naturally she, as well as Luciana, takes this as a new proof of her husband's wickedness and infidelity. This scene between the lovely Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse, of course, errs on the side of the highest improbability. It is true the amiable girl reasons earnestly with the man she

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deems her brother-in-law, imploring him to cease from urging his criminal passion, and, if he no longer cares for her sister, at least to feign affection, to save her suffering. But though in answer to his more serious wooing she asks him if he is "mad that he doth reason thus," her demeanour and her words are nevertheless inexplicable. Some idea would surely occur to her of a complication, a mistake, on hearing her brother-in-law, who never until that instant has uttered to her a syllable of love, burst out so suddenly into such passionate speeches. She would have felt the insult to herself contained in them and resented them strongly. Still more incomprehensible is the manner in which she meets the formal proposal of marriage with which he closes:

> Thou hast no husband yet, nor I no wife:
> Give me thy hand.
> *Luciana.* Oh, soft sir! hold you still:
> I'll fetch my sister to get her good will.

When Luciana tells her sister of this conversation, Adriana questions her eagerly concerning details. "Might'st thou perceive austerely in his eye, that he did plead in earnest, yea or no? Look'd he red or pale, or sad or merrily?" At the mention of Antipholus' assertion that he is a stranger she answers, "And true he swore, though yet forsworn he were." When Luciana relates that the flattering words of Antipholus were "words that in an honest suit might move," she asks, "Did'st speak him fair?" When Luciana beseeches her to have patience, she breaks into fury at the supposed falsehood of her husband and abuses him outrageously:

> My tongue, though not my heart, shall have his will.
> He is deformed, crooked, old and sere,
> Ill-faced, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere;
> Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind,
> Stigmatical in making, worse in mind.
> *The Comedy of Errors*, act iv. scene 2.

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"Who," says Luciana with good-natured sarcasm, "would be jealous, then, of such an one?"

> No evil lost is wailed when it is gone.

Adriana answers in a manner revealing how Shakespeare, even in the earliest period of his poetical development, had a keen insight into the secret depths of woman's heart:

> Ah! but I think him better than I say,
> And yet would herein others' eyes were worse.
> Far from her nest the lapwing cries away;
> My heart prays for him, though my tongue do curse.

We cannot follow these two women, whose contrasted characters we believe to have sufficiently indicated, through all the complicated windings, comic and serious, of the play, and must advise our readers to turn to the work itself. Only the close must be noticed, because this shows the character of Adriana as a wife in a still clearer light, and enables us to draw these conclusions as to Shakespeare's own life of which we spoke at the beginning of our analysis of the women of *The Comedy of Errors*. The complications of the play culminate when Antipholus of Ephesus, through being perpetually mistaken for his brother, and through the contradictions this brought about in his speech and action, as well as through his very natural indignation, is deemed mad by Adriana and others, and locked up in consequence. Adriana tries to get the "evil spirit" driven out of him by a charlatan magician, and when he resists he is bound and kept prisoner in his own house. Before he can free himself Adriana meets Antipholus of Syracuse, with his slave in the street, and supposing him to be her husband who has escaped, she orders her servants to arrest him. He takes refuge in a convent. The grey-haired abbess comes to the door to demand the cause of the tumult, and an important scene follows, which is in curious contradiction to the noisy and farcical action of the play. When the noble lady asks how madness has befallen

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this man, Adriana answers that for the last week he has been gloomy, silent, and different from his usual self, but only on the afternoon of that same day has his frenzy reached its climax. "Hath he," asks the abbess, "not lost much wealth by wreck at sea? buried some dear friend? hath not else his eye strayed his affection in unlawful love?" "None of these," answers Adriana, "except it be the last, namely, some love that drew him oft from home." With wonderful skill, with a method which may almost be called Socratic, the abbess induces the wife to say what she would have her tell. "You should," she says, "for that have reprehended him." "Why, so I did," says Adriana.

Abb. Ay, but not rough enough.
Adr. As roughly as my modesty would let me.
Abb. Haply, in private.
Adr. And in assemblies too.
Abb. Ay, but not enough.
Adr. It was the copy of our conference:
In bed he slept not for my urging it;
At board he fed not for my urging it;
Alone, it was the subject of my theme;
In company I often glanced it;
Still did I tell him it was vile and bad.
Abb. And thereof came it that the man was mad:
The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.
It seems his sleeps were hinder'd by thy railing,
And thereof comes it that his head is light.
Thou say'st his meat was sauced with thy upbraidings;
Unquiet meals make ill digestions;
Thereof the raging fire of fever bred;
And what's a fever but a fit of madness?
Thou say'st his sports were hinder'd by thy brawls:
Sweet recreation barr'd, what doth ensue
But moody and dull melancholy,
Kinsman to grim and comfortless Despair,
And at her heels a huge infectious troop
Of pale distemperatures and foes to life?
In food, in sport and life-preserving rest
To be disturb'd, would mad or man or beast:
The consequence is then thy jealous fits
Have scared thy husband from the use of wits.

The Comedy of Errors, act v. scene i.

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"She did betray me to my own reproof," says the young wife, before whom the wise abbess has held up this mirror. Does not this mirror, perhaps, reflect a picture from Shakespeare's own experience? From the scanty sources whence indications as to the poet's life are drawn no certain information can be obtained, nor even any of an approximate nature; so I will not depart from my rule not to put words into the poet's mouth. But the idea presses involuntarily. Nowhere, except in this play and in the *Taming of the Shrew*, has Shakespeare described a woman who torments herself and those around her by her temper. Altogether the women of the poet's first period were, as we have seen, not amiable. May not a reminiscence of some personal experience account for this? May not Shakespeare himself have suffered from such everlasting complaining and scolding at table, in harmless amusement, in bed when he would fain have slept? May he not have been driven from Stratford to London by such a life as he has here described so graphically both in its nature and its effects?

The close of this play is really serious. The confusion is ended by the meeting of the two pairs of twins. Ægeon, who has been pardoned by the Duke of Ephesus, embraces, in the noble lady abbess, his long lost wife Æmilia, and the whole family, after their many troubles, are at last happily reunited.

"THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"

Katharina—Bianca—The Widow

This play, which both internal and external evidence cause us to assign to Shakespeare's early period, combines, in a way afterwards much affected by the poet, two actions which take place side by side, and are only entwined at moments with each other. On one side we have the cunning wooing of the gentle Bianca by the refined Lucentio; on the other, that

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of ill-natured Katharina by rough Petruchio. The father of the two girls will not permit Bianca, the younger, to be married before her elder sister, and as no one dares propose for her, on account of her universally known ill-tempered and shrewish character, Bianca's suitors are delighted when in the rough and bold Petruchio, who, as he says, has come to Padua to make a rich marriage, a man is found to undertake the dangerous enterprise, out of a sort of bravado. He proves, however, the right man for the task; strong, imposing, conscious that his energy is not without manly charm, he is equal to the task of taming so fierce a steed. Katharina is so wild a girl that she may be compared to "a mare that strikes out both before and behind." Her father has spoiled her; she is unmannerly; she tyrannises over and maltreats her gentle and submissive sister. Still she is not without a seed of goodness, which shows itself at times in a noble manner. Her father's preference for her sister, the many rich suitors who surround Bianca, and her anger because no one proposes for her, all work together to strengthen her faults of temperament to the highest degree. Exceedingly amusing is the first interview of this singular pair. She abuses him in an outrageous manner, and even goes so far as to strike him. He maintains the most immovable calm. However sharply she answers, he tells her that she has been slandered, that she is playful, roguish, polite, sweet as spring flowers, she cannot scold nor frown. In spite of her opposition, he tells her father that they are perfectly agreed, that the marriage is to be on the next Sunday, and goes off to Venice to make his preparations. The marriage-day comes, but there is no bridegroom. Katharina is beside herself at the humiliation which a man who has been forced upon her makes her endure, leaving her alone to wait for him. Finally, at the very last moment, he appears, not in bridal array, but in plain, almost ragged clothes, and makes such a tumult in church that the priests and guests are shocked. The first effect of his system is

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to make Katharina completely dumb, and when he announces his intention of going away before the wedding banquet, she condescends, she, who has never begged for anything, to entreat him to stay, saying words which in her mouth mean much: "Now, if you love me, stay." But as he declares his immovable intention to depart, her obstinacy and ill-temper break out again. "Do what he can, she will not go, not to-day nor to-morrow, until she please herself," she will not endure that the "surly groom" should treat her so. Petruchio lets her run on. Coldly and calmly he says that she is his goods, his chattels, she is his house, his household stuff, his field, his barn, his horse, his ox, his ass, his anything, and "here," he says, "she stands, touch her whoever dare!" Whereupon he carries her away. When he arrives at his own house, he shows in his whole demeanour an exaggerated reflection of her own temper. He storms and scolds, he beats his servants, he flings the supper about the room, saying that it is spoilt, so that she goes hungry to bed. He hunts out of the house with savage abuse the tailor and milliner who bring home her new gown and head-dress, so that she has to go and visit her father in her tumbled riding-habit. He has already won the victory. When Katharina sees her own ways put before her in so exaggerated and caricatured a fashion, she recognises their hatefulness; and so great is the change in her, that she sees all things only through her husband's eyes. "It is the moon or sun or what he pleases," that is shining. "If he pleases to call it a rush-candle, henceforth she vows it shall be so for her." Copying him, she calls an old man a young beautiful girl, and immediately afterwards when he tells her that it is "a man, old, wrinkled, withered, and not a maiden," she begs him to pardon her "mistaking eyes, that have been so bedazzled with the sun." She gives her husband a kiss in the middle of the street, saying:

> Nay, I will give thee a kiss: now, pray thee, love, stay.

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He answers:

> Is not this well? Come, my sweet Kate:
> Better once than never, for never too late.

It is plain from this conversation that he has tamed this wild spirit, and created a reasonable hope that this singular couple, after such sharp quarrels, may lead a happy and peaceful married life. Katharina, whose temperament under her rough outside has always remained healthy and sincere, has learned by the example that Petruchio has set her how ugly such behaviour, which sits so ill on a man, must be in a woman. She has, besides, divined under the rough exterior of her husband the really worthy kernel of his nature. Love teaches her the true way to fulfil the part of a wife and the place which befits her husband's house. When the once so gentle Bianca, now married to Lucentio, and the widow married to Hortensio, one of Bianca's former suitors, show themselves unruly, she describes this position in these noble words, which every wife should take to heart:

> Fie, fie! unknit that threatening unkind brow,
> And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,
> To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor:
> It blots thy beauty as frosts do bite the meads,
> Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds,
> And in no sense is meet or amiable.
> A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
> Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
> And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
> Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it.
> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
> Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
> And for thy maintenance commits his body
> To painful labour both by sea and land,
> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
> Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;
> And craves no other tribute at thy hands
> But love, fair looks and true obedience;
> Too little payment for so great a debt.
> Such duty as the subject owes the prince
> Even such a woman oweth to her husband;

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And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foul contending rebel
And graceless traitor to her loving lord?
I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war when they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love and obey.
Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
But that our soft conditions and our hearts
Should well agree with our external parts?
Come, come, you froward and unable worms!
My mind hath been as big as one of yours,
My heart as great, my reason haply more,
To bandy word for word and frown for frown;
But now I see our lances are but straws,
Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.
Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
And place your hands below your husband's foot:
In token of which duty, if he please,
My hand is ready; may it do him ease.

The Taming of the Shrew, act v. scene 2.

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SHAKESPEARE'S SECOND PERIOD

"THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA"—"LOVE'S LABOUR LOST"—"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL"—"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"—"ROMEO AND JULIET"—"THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"—"RICHARD III."—"RICHARD II."—"KING JOHN"—"THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR"—"AS YOU LIKE IT"—"TWELFTH NIGHT"—"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"

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CHAPTER VI

SHAKESPEARE'S SECOND PERIOD

IN the first period of our poet's literary activity we know him chiefly as a paraphraser of plays. In his second period, comprising the last ten years of the sixteenth century, he rises to the rank of an independent master, with a positively astounding rapidity of development, which unfortunately we cannot follow step by step. The general impression, however, made by the works of this period, apart from their strong individuality, differs from that made by those of the first. While in the earlier we discover repeated grounds for believing that we encounter traces of unpleasant personal experiences, in the later works we think we see signs proving that they issue from the mind of a man who is happy and content, favoured by success, and living in prosperous outward circumstances. Comedy prevails, and, even in the serious plays, we do not find so much bitterness and misanthropy as in the earlier works.

"THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA"

Julia—Silvia

For many reasons, internal and external, which we cannot detail here, this comedy must be assigned to an early period of Shakespeare's activity; hence we place it at the head of this second period.

Two young gentlemen have grown up in intimate friendship in Verona. Valentine, who is full of noble ambition, seeks his fortune at the court of the Duke of Milan, while love for

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the beautiful Julia keeps the other, Proteus, in Verona. Just as he succeeds in assuring himself that his love is returned, he also, at his father's command, goes to Milan to perfect himself in courtly training. Here he meets Valentine, who has become the successful suitor of the Duke's daughter, Silvia. But the Duke destines her for Thurio, a very rich, but very foolish man. Proteus—whose name is no doubt chosen designedly for making mythological allusions, after a fashion affected by Shakespeare in his early works—becomes a traitor to love and friendship. He forgets Julia, adores Silvia, and betrays to the Duke a project Valentine has confided to him of eloping with Silvia. Valentine is forced to fly from the Duke's wrath. The false friend strives in vain, in Valentine's absence, to shake the faith of his lady-love, who, knowing that Proteus has left a lady in Verona to whom his faith is plighted, treats him with contempt. She is only occupied with plans for joining Valentine, who meantime, driven by necessity, becomes the leader of a band of outlaws banished for political reasons. The forsaken Julia, impelled by her passionate longing for Proteus, has followed him in disguise, and entered his service as a page. She has to carry love messages to Silvia, she is present when her false lover, accused by that lady of treason to love and friendship, excuses himself by a lie, saying that Valentine and Julia are dead. Silvia, who does not believe him, escapes; the Duke, accompanied by Proteus, Julia, and Thurio, goes after her. They are all taken prisoners by the outlawed band. Proteus saves Silvia from the grasp of a robber, and, encouraged by this, once more sues for her love. Valentine, who has only heard of this dialogue, accuses Proteus bitterly of treachery, but, on his expressing deep repentance, forgives him. He is even ready to yield to him the hand of Silvia, of whom, now that he has become a bandit, he considers himself unworthy. Julia, who, in spite of all her inward suffering, has so far played her part perfectly, can bear it no longer now she seems about to lose

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Proteus altogether, sinks fainting to the ground. As Proteus recognises her, his old love is re-awakened, and they renew their vows. The Duke, who during the combat has been disgusted by the cowardly demeanour of Thurio, forgives the outlaws, and with them Valentine, to whom he grants Silvia's hand. However hurried and inartistic may be the close of this play, the characters are truly and carefully delineated. We will discuss the women briefly. Julia is a mirror of the purest, most modest womanhood. She speaks of Proteus, whom she already secretly loves, with most modest outward reserve; she sharply scolds her maid who brings her a love-letter from him, and when the girl leaves her says, with charming *naïveté:*

> And yet I would I had o'erlooked the letter;
> It were a shame to call her back again
> And pray her to a fault for which I chid her.
> What a fool is she, that knows I am a maid,
> And would not force the letter to my view!
> Since maids, in modesty, say 'no' to that
> Which they would have the profferer construe 'ay.'
> Fie, fie, how wayward is this foolish love
> That, like a testy babe, will scratch the nurse
> And presently all humbled kiss the rod!
> How churlishly I chid Lucetta hence,
> When willingly I would have had her here!
> How angerly I taught my brow to frown,
> When inward joy enforced my heart to smile!
>
> *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act i. scene 2.

When, however, Lucetta returns and bears the letter with her, Julia tears it, but carefully collects the pieces. In the sad moment of parting with her beloved she is speechless with grief. When he is gone, the most intense longing to behold him overcomes her; she conquers all her girlish timidity, and hastens after him in masculine attire, while with noble unshaken faith she repels the doubts her maid tries to throw upon his fidelity. Sad is it for her when she learns that she has given her heart to one unworthy; but this unworthiness does not quench her affection; she remains

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faithful to the faithless one. She serves him in ways that go near to break her heart, until, at last, in the forest, when Valentine offers to resign Silvia to Proteus, she betrays herself, overpowered by grief. She forgives the repentant Proteus, and re-bestows on him her love, a richer gift than he deserves. Silvia is of another temperament. She meets Valentine, whose love she discovers and returns half way, conveying to him by a charming device a favourable answer to the wooing he is too timid to proffer. But her fidelity to her beloved is as strong as Julia's. She remains true to him against the suitor forced upon her, as well as against Proteus, who, when through treachery he has got rid of Valentine, persecutes her with his protestations. With noble indignation she reproaches Proteus for his faithlessness to the poor forsaken Julia, not knowing that Julia is present. She also stigmatises his treachery to his friend, and when Proteus tries to excuse himself by saying that Valentine is dead, she gives him this splendid answer, which bespeaks the whole steadfast truth of a noble woman's heart:

> And so suppose am I; for in his grave
> Assure thyself my love is buried.

Thus she remains unshakenly faithful to her lover. She braves the dangers of flight, of the forest, of the bandits, until her father at last crowns her love with his consent to her marriage with Valentine.

"LOVE'S LABOUR LOST"

The Princess of France—Rosaline

There is no doubt that the comedy *Love's Labour Lost* pertains to Shakespeare's early works, and belongs most probably to the same period as the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In this comedy we frequently find the distinguishing marks of Shakespeare's early poems. Mythology and ancient history play a great part; the verse is formed after

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the older English style; more than half is rhymed, and much of it is alliterative. The piling up of witty puns, of so-called "*concetti*," which Italian poetry had brought into fashion, resembles that of Shakespeare's narrative poems. Without question, as far as form and handling of material are concerned, it falls far below Shakespeare's other dramatic works.

The young King of Navarre and certain of his courtiers have sworn to lead for three years an ascetic studious life, avoiding the society of women. They have forgotten that it will be impossible to keep this last article of their vow, because the Princess of France is coming immediately to treat with the King, in her father's name, concerning important financial matters. She appears, in company with her ladies, Rosaline, Maria, and Katherine. The meeting is not to be avoided. They are merry, clever French ladies, ready for amusement, but really resolved to obtain, in earnest, good conditions for their own country. They surpass in wit the courtiers of the King of Navarre, though one of these, Biron, considers himself the wittiest man alive, and turns everything into ridicule. That happens which was sure to occur. The King and his courtiers fall head over ears in love, and a very droll scene takes place, in which they respectively surprise each other, as they are reading over the love-verses they have written. The ladies are overwhelmed with gifts and witty poems, and further the young gentlemen lay a plan to win their favour by means of a masquerade. But an old courtier of the Princess overhears this plan and betrays it to his mistress. Upon this the clever French-women also mask, and manage to change about so skilfully, that the Navarrese gentlemen are deceived, addressing the wrong ladies, so that their passionate declarations reach ears for which they were not intended. Pitiless raillery is heaped on them, and they depart discomfited. They are now doubly perjured, in that they have broken their vow of ascetic living, and have besides sworn oaths of love to other ladies than their own.

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The merry play which continues after the gentlemen have returned unmasked, and have learned, to their confusion, how they have been hoaxed, is interrupted by a messenger telling that the King of France is dead. Plunged in the deepest grief, the Princess desires to depart at once, but the King adjures her, before she leaves, to promise him her love, and the courtiers proffer the same prayer to the ladies of their heart. The answers of the ladies reveal how under all their merriment and sarcasm there lies a kernel of wisdom, real purity, and goodness. The Princess, rendered gentle by her sudden grief, excuses her merry boldness by saying that she took the whole thing for play, and when the King renews his suit, she answers that they have not known each other long enough to swear to a bond for life. She reminds him how he has broken his vow, and sets him the following conditions:

> Your oath I will not trust; but go with speed
> To some forlorn and naked hermitage,
> Remote from all the pleasures of the world;
> There stay until the twelve celestial signs
> Have brought about the annual reckoning.
> If this austere insociable life
> Change not your offer made in heat of blood;
> If frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin weeds,
> Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love,
> But that it bear this trial and last love;
> Then, at the expiration of the year,
> Come challenge me, challenge me by these deserts,
> And, by this virgin palm now kissing thine,
> I will be thine; and till that instant shut
> My woeful self up in a mourning house,
> Raining the tears of lamentation
> For the remembrance of my father's death.
> If this thou do deny, let our hands part,
> Neither intitled in the other's heart.
>
> *Love's Labour Lost*, act v. scene 2.

A woman who insists on being won under such conditions has the highest conception of what is meant by love and of what love can do. Her heart and head are both sound, and

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she is worth the sacrifice she exacts. The lovely clever Rosaline gives Biron, the bitter mocker, who sues for her hand, a severe lesson:

> You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
> Visit the speechless sick and still converse
> With groaning wretches; and your task shall be,
> With all the fierce endeavour of your wit,
> To enforce the pained impotent to smile.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Why, that's the way to choke a gibing spirit,
> Whose influence is begot of that loose grace
> Which shallow laughing hearers give to fools:
> A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
> Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
> Of him that makes it; then, if sickly ears,
> Deaf'd with the clamours of their own dear groans,
> Will hear your idle scorns, continue then,
> And I will have you and that fault withal;
> But if they will not, throw away that spirit,
> And I shall find you empty of that fault,
> Right joyful of your reformation.
>
> *Love's Labour Lost*, act v. scene 2.

These are golden words, which honour alike the understanding and the heart of her who speaks them. Biron declares himself ready "to jest a twelvemonth in an hospital." The other cavaliers also receive from their ladies similar answers. The women then take their leave. The piece, which also contains a great deal of burlesque which we have left unnoticed, closes, against all usage, without a marriage. As Biron says:

> Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
> Jack hath not Jill; these ladies' courtesy
> Might well have made our sport a comedy.

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL"

Helena—Countess of Roussillon

The character of Juliet shows the most intimate connection between passion and fantasy that can be imagined in a female character. Helena in *All's Well that Ends*

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Well is differently constituted. In common with Juliet, her love is passionate, spiritual, free from all egotism, but it is not, like Juliet's, entwined with fantasy, but with a firm and resolute will, an unbending strength of purpose, which renders Helena an entirely different personality. Such a character presents one of the most difficult problems a poet can set himself to portray, namely, a womanly being who is exquisitely susceptible of all noble influences from without, and yet has the power to follow a certain fixed aim with unshaken determination, not suffering herself to be turned aside either by external influences or by the desires of her heart. Shakespeare has attempted to solve this problem in Helena, and since it is certain that the poetical development of such a nature is as difficult as the character itself is rare in real life, we can but marvel at the masterly solution it has found in *All's Well that Ends Well.*

From the first we note a difference between the presentation of Juliet and Helena in the language Shakespeare has put into their mouths. Juliet's passion reveals itself in glowing picturesque fluency; Helena lacks the outward glow and splendour of speech and metaphor. In her, passion shows itself in the earnestness with which she pursues an apparently unattainable end, in straightforward unshaken resolution, without poetic adornment in thought, language, or demeanour. Helena's character is related to that of Isabella in *Measure for Measure.* Both are endowed with brilliant intellectual capacity; both bear the stamp of an amiable melancholy without being thereby hindered in their practical issues or rendered morbid. But their firmness of purpose is founded on different bases. Isabella's is derived from strong religious conviction; Helena's, on the contrary, is drawn solely and only from the deep passionate love which entirely fills her soul. Helena is introduced to us in a dependent and humiliating position. She is of low birth; she loves a youth her superior in rank, who feels no attach-

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ment for her, and refuses to hear of any bond between them, indignantly repudiating the idea of marriage. She forces him, by command of the king, to espouse her. After the compulsory ceremony which unites them, he immediately repulses her, making their marital union dependent on conditions which seem impossible. "When thou canst get the ring from my finger that never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to, then call me husband, but in such a then write I never." Her position is not only unhappy, it offends our taste, and yet her character rises in inward sincerity, touching nobility, and beauty, above the unworthiness of her condition. Shakespeare drew his fable from Boccaccio's tales. Giletta of Narbonne, the daughter of a celebrated physician at the court of Roussillon, is a rich heiress. She refuses many distinguished and aristocratic suitors because she secretly loves the young Count Bertram of Roussillon. The King of France has fallen into a grievous sickness, which resists the skill of the best physicians. Giletta has inherited from her father an infallible remedy for this disease. As a reward for curing the king she asks for Count Bertram's hand. He is obliged to give it by the king's command. But on the marriage-day he repulses her, and sends her to his castle of Roussillon, where she is received with demonstrations of honour. During her husband's absence she holds the reins of government and wins all hearts by her wisdom and kindness. The Count flies to Tuscany, and the rest of the story is the same as in the drama. Giletta's gifts, her beauty, her intellect, the wisdom with which she conducts the regency fallen into her hands, her passionate love for Bertram, are described in the tale with all Boccaccio's delicious skill. But the Helena of the play surpasses his heroine in attraction, for the reason that the dramatist makes our sympathy depend not on the outward circumstances in which she finds herself, but upon the essence of her being, upon the power and energy of

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her emotions. Notwithstanding her dignity of demeanour, she is free from any suspicion of haughtiness, her amiable and unassuming modesty is one of her greatest charms. She by no means considers her low birth as a subject for humiliation. On the contrary, she holds that, as the daughter of a celebrated and respected physician, she has reason to be prouder than the highest noble who boasts a long line of ancestors. She only rebels at her low birth because owing to prevailing prejudices she is thereby irrevocably severed from the man who possesses her heart, and in whose company she has grown up. Her love for this companion of her youth has grown with her growth, and has so overpowered all her thoughts and emotions, that her whole being is really nothing but love for Bertram, and if Bertram is taken out of her life, her life will go after him. It impresses us agreeably, we admit, that the object of this boundless, stainless, soulful, selfless love, in his pride, heartlessness, and caprice, is not worthy of such devotion. But Helena does not look on him with the eyes of the impartial reader or spectator, but with those of her own idealising fancy, which has set him up as the ideal of perfect manliness. Bertram has been very severely handled by English critics. Doctor Johnson says, "I cannot reconcile my heart to Bertram, who marries Helena as a coward and leaves her as a profligate." But for the judgment of the play or of his character it is perfectly indifferent whether Dr. Johnson, and the whole pack of English critics, can reconcile themselves to Bertram or not. The only question is, whether Helena, according to her character, as the poet develops it, can forgive him; if such an ending as he has given to the play is in contradiction to universal psychological truth, and to the emotional working of the nature of the female sex. And here Shakespeare has shown once more his intimate knowledge of the deepest springs of the human, the female heart. With calm superiority he rises above critics who, like Johnson, altogether condemn Bertram, deeming him

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unworthy of the love and forgiveness of Helena, and above those (and they are not a few) who have set themselves the task of whitewashing Bertram, seeking excuses for his conduct in order to explain Helena's devotion and to justify her forgiveness. Both schools of criticism have misunderstood Shakespeare. This great reader of the human heart knew right well that logic and womanly passion are two very different things. He knew well that the most perfect and lovable women, gifted with every bodily charm, with every intellectual superiority, with every outward advantage of position, give their affections to men entirely unworthy in every respect. In spite of all opposition from those who surround them, they hold fast by this love, even when the unworthiness of the beloved object has been proved again and again, and when they have been themselves wounded, nay, maltreated by the man they worship. Therefore it is useless to try and explain Helena's devotion by making out Bertram better than he seems, in order to prove that the woman's love is not contradictory to psychological possibility or probability. It is also a wrong to the poet, when he is accused, because of Bertram's unsympathetic character, of having shocked our sense of psychological possibility and probability in making a creature so womanly and worthy of love as he depicts Helena capable of loving and forgiving a man who seems to us so unamiable. Helena loves Bertram, not because he is worthy, but just because she loves him, and that is a reason with which, as far as the female sex is concerned, we are only too often forced to declare ourselves content. One of the most beautiful scenes is that in which the Countess of Roussillon, Bertram's mother, forces Helena to confess her love. We give it here, because all the most prominent and most amiable features of Helena's character are displayed in it, and also because it brings before us in the Countess of Roussillon an important female character worthy of our attention:

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Hel. What is your pleasure, madam?
Count. You know, Helen,
I am a mother to you.
Hel. Mine honourable mistress.
Count. Nay, a mother;
Why not a mother? When I said 'a mother,'
Methought you saw a serpent: what's in 'mother,'
That you start at it? I say, I am your mother;
And put you in the catalogue of those
That were enwombed mine; 'tis often seen
Adoption strives with nature and choice breeds
A native slip to us from foreign seeds;
You ne'er oppress'd me with a mother's groan,
Yet I express to you a mother's care:
God's mercy, maiden! does it curd thy blood
To say I am thy mother? What's the matter,
That this distemper'd messenger of wet,
The many-colour'd Iris, rounds thine eye?
Why? that you are my daughter?
Hel. That I am not.
Count. I say, I am your mother.
Hel. Pardon, madam;
The Count Roussillon cannot be my brother;
I am from humble, he from honour'd name;
No note upon my parents, his all noble;
My master, my dear lord he is; and I
His servant live, and will his vassal die:
He must not be my brother.
Count. Nor I your mother?
Hel. You are my mother, madam; would you were,—
So that my lord your son were not my brother,—
Indeed my mother! or were you both our mothers,
I care no more for than I do for heaven,
So I were not his sister. Can't no other,
But I your daughter, he must be my brother?
Count. Yes, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law;
God shield you mean it not! daughter and mother
So strive upon your pulse. What, pale again?
My fear hath catch'd your fondness; now I see
The mystery of your loneliness, and find
Your salt tears' head; now to all sense 'tis gross
You love my son; invention is ashamed,
Against the proclamation of thy passion,
To say thou dost not; therefore tell me true;
But tell me then, 'tis so; for, look, thy cheeks
Confess it, th' one to th' other; and thine eyes
See it so grossly shown in thy behaviours
That in their kind they speak it; only sin

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And hellish obstinacy tie thy tongue,
That truth should be suspected. Speak, is't so?
If it be so, you have wound a goodly clew;
If it be not, forswear't; howe'er, I charge thee,
As heaven shall work in me for thine avail,
To tell me truly.
Hel. Good madam, pardon me!
Count. Do you love my son?
Hel. Your pardon, noble mistress!
Count. Love you my son?
Hel. Do not you love him, madam?
Count. Go not about; my love hath in't a bond,
Whereof the world takes note; come, come, disclose
The state of your affection; for your passions
Have to the full appeach'd.
Hel. Then, I confess,
Here on my knee, before high heaven and you,
That before you, and next unto high heaven,
I love your son.
My friends were poor, but honest; so's my love;
Be not offended; for it hurts not him
That he is loved of me; I follow him not
By any token of presumptuous suit;
Nor would I have him till I do deserve him;
Yet never know how that desert should be.
I know I love in vain, strive against hope;
Yet in this captious and intenible sieve
I still pour in the waters of my love,
And lack not to lose still; thus, Indian-like,
Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper,
But knows of him no more. My dearest madam,
Let not your hate encounter with my love
For loving where you do; but if yourself,
Whose aged honour cites a virtuous youth,
Did ever in so true a flame of liking
Wish chastely and love dearly, that your Dian
Was both herself and love; O, then, give pity
To her whose state is such that cannot choose
But lend and give where she is sure to lose;
That seeks not to find that her search implies,
But riddle-like lives sweetly where she dies!

All's Well that Ends Well, act i. scene 3.

The confession of her love is drawn from her by force, she struggles against it, her whole being is shaken; but when at last the irresistible pressure put upon her by the

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Countess has brought it to her lips, she regains her self-possession, her calm, her peace of mind. She admits her love without subtleties of expression, without vain pretension, with a simple but earnest passion, which, having broken for the first time from her closed heart, finds vent in words full of eloquence. The Countess Roussillon is one of those old women who, under wrinkles and white hair, remember the brightness and beauty of their youth. How infinitely more worthy of affection she appears than the old Lady Capulet, Juliet's mother, who for the lovely being who is her own child has never one of the tender expressions by which Countess Roussillon shows that she bears her adopted daughter a true and warm mother's love. And what is the conduct of this worthy lady after Helena has confessed her passion for the young Count, and begs forgiveness of his mother for presuming to love him? Her demeanour is original and peculiar, but quite comprehensible, if we consider her character and her sentiments towards Helena. She answers not a word to the confession she has forced, in so energetic a manner, and for which she has now not a word either of reproof or encouragement. But what she says, the questions she puts to Helena, although they seem to have no connection either with her love or with her fate, are more than an encouragement to the young girl, are almost a complete assurance that she, the mother, has no objection to her love, or even to her marriage with Bertram. Without replying to Helena's ardent words and prayers, she asks the maiden, in quiet tones, if she had not lately an intention of visiting Paris, and with what purpose she was going there? Helena answers that she had the idea of going thither because she had heard that the King of France had fallen into a malignant illness, against which all advice and all remedies proved useless, though the best and most celebrated physicians had been called in. As she has inherited from her father a prescription to cure this very disease, she deems it may prove effectual

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against the king's sickness. When the Countess, as sole reply to the girl's confession of love, has put this question, when she has rejoined to Helena's answer another question, does Helena think that the king, whose own best physicians cannot help him, will "credit a poor unlearned virgin, when the schools have left the danger to itself," and as Helena reiterates her intention to proceed to Paris (whither Bertram has already gone), she gives her leave to go in these words:

> Why, Helen, thou shalt have my leave and love,
> Means and attendants and my loving greetings
> To those of mine in court: I'll stay at home
> And pray God's blessing into thy attempt;
> Be gone to-morrow; and be sure of this,
> What I can help thee to thou shalt not miss.
>
> *All's Well that Ends Well*, act i. scene 3.

Hence it is clear that Helena's love has nothing to fear from the pride of the old Countess. Helena's soliloquy, before her confession, shows that she regards her journey to Paris and attempt to cure the king only as a means to an end, the only way of reaching her earthly bliss, the possession of Bertram and his love. She cherishes, on the other hand, an unshaken faith in the mighty and magical power of a love so warm and deep as hers. She trusts that this love will at last prove victorious, and obtain the answering passion of the man she adores.

> Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
> Which we ascribe to heaven: the fated sky
> Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull
> Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
> What power is it which mounts my love so high,
> That makes me see, and cannot feed mine eye?
> The mightiest space in fortune nature brings
> To join like likes and kiss like native things.
> Impossible be strange attempts to those
> That weigh their pains in sense and do suppose
> What hath been cannot be; who ever strove
> To show her merit that did miss her love?

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The king's disease—my project may deceive me,
But my intents are fix'd and will not leave me.
All's Well that Ends Well, act i. scene 1.

Helena carries out her resolution, and goes to the king's court at Paris. At first the king will not confide himself to her treatment, because he considers his illness incurable, but the unshaken faith with which she offers her own life as a pledge for its success moves him to make a trial:

King. Methinks in thee some blessed spirit doth speak
His powerful sound within an organ weak;
And what impossibility would slay
In common sense, sense saves another way.
Thy life is dear; for all that life can rate
Worth name of life in thee hath estimate,
Youth, beauty, wisdom, courage, all
That happiness and prime can happy call:
Thou this to hazard needs must intimate
Skill infinite or monstrous desperate.
Sweet practiser, thy physic I will try,
That ministers thine own death if I die.
All's Well that Ends Well, act ii. scene 1.

Helena answers:

Not helping, death's my fee;
But, if I help, what do you promise me?

"Make thy demand," the king answers, and swears to fulfil it. She rejoins:

Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand
What husband in thy power I will command. . . . .
Such a one, thy vassal, whom I know
Is free for me to ask, thee to bestow.

The king promises to fulfil her desire. The cure is miraculously effected. Helena asks for Count Bertram of Roussillon as a husband. True to his word, the king says, "Why then, young Bertram, take her; she's thy wife." Bertram with angry and contemptuous expressions refuses:

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Ber. My wife, my liege! I shall beseech your highness,
In such a business give me leave to use
The help of mine own eyes.
King. Know'st thou not, Bertram,
What she has done for me?
Ber. Yes, my good lord;
But never hope to know why I should marry her.
King. Thou know'st she has raised me from my sickly bed.
Ber. But follows it, my lord, to bring me down
Must answer for your raising? I know her well;
She had her breeding at my father's charge.
A poor physician's daughter my wife! Disdain
Rather corrupt me ever!

All's Well that Ends Well, act ii. scene 3.

This openly expressed contempt, this angry refusal, in spite of the monarch's fluent oration in her favour, wounds Helena so deeply that she seems inclined to forego her wish. She says to the king, "That you are well restored, my lord, I am glad. Let the rest go!" But Bertram, threatened by the angry king with banishment and loss of favour, declares himself ready, in spite of his unwillingness, which he takes no pains to conceal, to marry her, and offers her his hand, which she accepts. This incident requires a separate examination. We feel tempted to call it ignoble, incompatible with the pride and self-respect of a virtuous maiden, who stands upon her dignity, to insist on taking for a husband a man who repulses her, and repeatedly announces his objection to this union. But this is excused by Helena's character, and especially by a certain trait we have already mentioned. Helena, namely, as we have already seen, is devoutly possessed with the conviction that a love so sincere and warm as hers cannot for ever remain unreturned. She holds it to be impossible that the man to whom her faithful heart, her glowing soul, the last breath of her life, is consecrated, can remain untouched by so much devotion. When once she calls him her own, she hopes, through her perpetual care, her humble tireless tenderness, always ready and waiting its opportunity, in the end to touch and win his heart. She has

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never contemplated the possibility that Bertram will carry his objection to the marriage so far as to refuse her a wedded life on which she had counted as a means of conquest, through the magic of her tenderness. Little does she dream that he will send her away. From this romantic conviction, which gives her strength to hope for the best, she also draws the power to bear all indignities, and to tread her maiden pride under foot, in order to reach a distant difficult goal, in which she has placed all hopes of happiness, and which she firmly believes she can attain. She has already laid aside her womanly timidity, since she has chosen Bertram for her husband before the whole court. It would be contrary to Helena's steadfast resolute determination, now that things have gone so far, to lose, through exaggerated timidity, the hand of her beloved, and to become a lost and despised creature, the object of continual ridicule. Pride only bars the way to her felicity. It is not she herself whom Bertram dismisses; it is the "poor physician's daughter." Her understanding is too clear and sharp not to see that this is no fatal insult. She is intimately convinced that her softening and taming affection will overcome this strong pride of ancestry, that it will in time give way to the influence of her victorious devotion. So she sacrifices momentarily her womanly pride for the sake of her high and precious aim, and accepts the hand that is given only on compulsion, and through fear of the king's anger. But for the moment the outraged Bertram allows no time or opportunity for her love and gentleness to work on him. He parts from her on the spot. She obeys the order he gives her to proceed immediately to his mother at the Castle of Roussillon, while he goes off to the wars in Tuscany. Cruel is the letter he sends her, which we have already given; difficult, almost impossible the conditions under which he will return to her. "Until I have no wife," he says, "I have nothing in France." The old Countess espouses Helena's side, and is angry with her son. But Helena is too noble

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to banish the Count, on account of her presence, from his native land and ancestral castle. She resolves to go:

> *Hel.* Nothing in France, until he has no wife!
> Thou shalt have none, Roussillon, none in France;
> Then hast thou all again. . . . . No, no, although
> The air of Paradise did fan the house,
> And angels officed all: I will be gone,
> That pitiful rumour may report my flight,
> To consolate thine ear.
>
> *All's Well that Ends Well*, act iii. scene 2.

She goes to Florence disguised as a pilgrim. Here nothing is talked of but the heroic deeds of the young French captain of cavalry, Bertram, Count of Roussillon. She makes the acquaintance of a beautiful Florentine, Diana, and her mother, and hears from them that the Count has fallen in love with the girl, and pursues her with a passionate suit she steadfastly resists. Helena's quick eye detects that here may be the opportunity she is seeking. She discovers herself to the women, and promises a rich reward if they will aid her in her bold plan. The young girl must promise to receive the Count in her chamber, but only at the hour of most profound darkness, and after he has given her the family ring which had never left his finger. Led by his blind unreasoning passion, he fulfils the conditions, and finds in Diana's chamber, without perceiving the exchange, Helena, who passionately returns his embrace, and gives him a ring she received from the King of France. Their meeting has the consequence she hoped, but for a time she remains concealed, until the right moment comes, and meantime she spreads a report of her death. She travels with Diana and her mother, of whom she does not wish to lose sight, as they are her most important witnesses. At last a favourable opportunity offers at Roussillon Castle, whither the King of France has gone to meet Bertram, returned from Florence full of glory. After many comic adventures, difficult to relate, Helena proves that the two conditions are fulfilled, and Bertram acknowledges her as his wife. He

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assures her that when he heard of her death he recognised her worth, and was filled with love and regret. But Bertram showed his real character too clearly for us to trust him; still we do not feel uneasy concerning the happiness of the young married pair. Helena's love is so deep, her strength of character, and especially her tact, so great, that we are convinced she will exert a purifying and ennobling influence over her husband, and so enchain his affections that, in time, when, by prudence, energy, and steadfastness, she has, through much suffering, reached her wished-for goal, she will be able truly to say, "All's well that ends well."

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Hermia—Helena—Titania

The fantastic play Shakespeare called *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written between the years 1594 and 1596, and apparently, like the *Tempest* and *Henry VIII.*, for some high court festivity. A wonderfully beautiful passage is worded in direct homage to the Virgin Queen Elizabeth. Oberon says to his attendant sprite Puck:

> Thou rememberest
> Since once I sat upon a promontory,
> And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
> Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
> That the rude sea grew civil at her song
> And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
> To hear the sea-maid's music.
> That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
> Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
> At a fair vestal throned by the west,
> And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
> Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
> And the imperial votaress passed on,
> In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
> Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:

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It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, act ii. scene 1.

A merry fantastic fairy piece, constructed on a very simple action. Theseus, king of Athens, orders Philistratus, the ruler of his revels, to do everything that can be done to make his nuptials with Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, as gay and brilliant as possible. There comes before Theseus, Ægeus, and complains of his daughter Hermia, who despises Demetrius, the husband he has chosen for her, and whom until now she has looked upon with favour, and has chosen instead Lysander, who has won her heart with poems, flowers, and such like things. Hermia is described as a beautiful little personage, already "a vixen when she went to school," now positively headstrong in her new fancy, defying all threats. She prefers a cloister to Demetrius, in spite of his tender love, in spite of his outward and inward superiority to Lysander. The tall slender Helena, whom Demetrius formerly courted, still loves him tenderly, although he has turned to the tiny Hermia, who despises him. Thus we see Helena running after Demetrius, who will not listen to her, but runs after Hermia, who will not listen to him. Strife also has broken out between the rulers of the realm of Faery, Oberon and Titania, partly through jealousy, as each accuses the other of preferring respectively Theseus and Hippolyta, partly on account of a little Indian boy whom they both wish to own. The fairy queen uses her tongue so sharply that the king leaves her in anger. He revenges himself by squeezing upon her eyelids, while she sleeps, the juice of a flower which has the effect of making her fall in love with the first creature she sees on waking. A group of Athenian mechanics has assembled in the wood to rehearse a dramatic performance they intend to act at the king's wedding. The drollest personage among them, the

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weaver Bottom, is the being who first meets Titania's eyes, after he has been decorated by Puck with an ass's head. Hence ensues a comic scene not without importance. Fancy and imagination predominate in this play. Titania loves an ass because she idealises him. From the same source spring the perpetual changes in the loves of Demetrius and Helena, Hermia and Lysander, which are only symbolically due to the working of the wonder-flower. The piece is rightly called a dream; a fantastic dream-world is brought before us, in which the hard and fast laws of actual existence are disregarded, and everything is possible, even the impossible. There is no need of any regular description or discussion of the characters in such a play. The personages do not act of themselves; they, and all they say and do, are in the power of the magician, who flings them about as he likes. Hence there is no need of a careful characterisation of the two girls; it is only necessary to mention their divergence. Hermia appeals in many ways to our sympathy; she is saucy, resolute even towards the king, who gives her the choice of obeying her father and marrying Demetrius, or of spending her life in a lonely cloister:

> So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
> Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
> Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke
> My soul consents not to give sovereignty.
>
> *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, act i. scene 1.

She determines to fly with Lysander, to be married in some place not subject to the stern Athenian law. Helena is rather lachrymose, and unpleasantly sentimental, but none the less, like Hermia, she has a sharp and bitter tongue. She has learned from Hermia that she is going to meet Lysander in the wood to consult about their flight. When Helena, to please Demetrius, betrays them, it is still her own doing, because she is not yet under magic influence. But when Demetrius seeks and finds the fugitive pair in the forest, when Helena runs after him, when Puck, either

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by mistake or out of mischief, makes the most absurd blunders with the juice of the wonder-flower; when, after all, through the same magic influence, they are once more brought into the right relations, everything is all jumbled wildly and unconsciously together. These people do not act of their own free will, so there is no question of characterising their action. In the world of magic there is neither logic nor consequence. But beside this wonder-world, the poem contains a masterly piece of pure realism, the play of the Athenian workmen, a parody on the condition of the London stage. Its charm lies in its comically effective contrasts, which set forth in the drollest manner, in the midst of the pure poetry of the drama, the "most lamentable comedy of the very cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe," and places the actors thereof in ordinary everyday shape, and in the most natural fashion before our eyes.

"ROMEO AND JULIET"

Juliet—Lady Capulet—The Nurse

Lessing, in his *Dramaturgy*, when criticising Voltaire's *Zaire*, says that an art critic ably remarked that love himself dictated this tragedy to Voltaire. He had better have said: Gallantry. I know but one tragedy in which love himself seems to have helped, and that is Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It is true that Voltaire makes his enamoured Zaire express her feelings in refined and appropriate phrases, but what are these phrases beside the living picture of all the smallest, most secret struggles through which love steals into the soul, all the unobtrusive victories he wins there, all the power and art with which he subdues every other passion, until he becomes the absolute tyrant of every opinion and desire? The passion of love is its groundwork. The play has been called the "high anthem of love." Mrs. Jameson says: "In Shake-

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speare all the women love, have loved, or are capable of loving, because they are true women. Juliet is love itself. That passion is the reason of her being; without it she would cease to exist; it is the pulse of her heart, the life-blood in her veins, entwined with every fibre of her nature. Love, so pure and noble in Portia, so ethereally tender and free from care in Miranda, so sweetly trusting in Perdita, so playful in Rosalind, so faithful in Imogen, so full of submission in Desdemona, is in Juliet all these at once. They all remind us of her; she reminds us of nothing but her own sweet self. Thus she stands, together with her Romeo, in contradistinction to their whole surroundings, full of love in the midst of hatred, full of harmony in the midst of the jarring clash of enmity."

Verona is kept in perpetual unrest by the ever-renewed strife between the two great houses of Montague and Capulet. Blood flows in the streets, for the servants of the two families lose no opportunity of breaking out into strife and flying to arms. The ruler of the city has warned the unruly vassals, threatening that the next breach of the city's peace will be punished in life and limb. In these two houses have grown up, unknown to each other, two beings, both in strong contradiction to their surroundings, doomed by fate to break down with their love the family hatred, and through their painful death to reconcile the inimical houses, and quench with their blood the flame of discord that had lasted for a century. The poet has nowhere actually described Juliet Capulet, but, with consummate art, without any such formal description, he has revealed her to us as infinitely charming. Every utterance of her father, of the friar, of Romeo, unite around her an entrancing picture of young and tender sweetness, whose influence is heightened when we learn that love for her has driven the image of another from Romeo's heart. And from what environment has this lovely creature sprung? Between haughty parents and a plebeian nurse, her purity and gentleness are placed in a high light and prepare us for

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her future sufferings. She trembles before her stern mother, before her rough fiery father. Like a spoiled child, she alternately flatters and tyrannises over her nurse; hence the mingling of wilfulness and impatience, of strength and weakness, of distrust and confidence, we find in her character. On the other side, Romeo Montague, equally different from his surroundings, in the midst of the clash of arms that resounds about him, remains soft and susceptible, and is known, even among the impartial members of the house of his foemen, as a "virtuous and well-governed youth," averse to the wild strife of the time, seeking solitude, giving himself over to love for a beauty who turns from him in cold inaccessible chastity. Thus we find him on the morning of the day on which the fatal action begins that dooms him to an early grave. Already, before daybreak, he is "early walking underneath the grove of sycamore that westward rooteth from the city's side." Seeking solitude, avoiding a meeting with his cousin Benvolio, given up entirely to romantic dreams of his cold and cruel beloved, whose charms he, at last constrained to speak by that same cousin, praises as above all female beauty on earth:

> Show me a mistress that is passing fair,
> What doth her beauty serve, but as a note
> Where I may read who pass'd that passing fair?
> Farewell: thou canst not teach me to forget.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act i. scene 1.

Juliet's heart, on the contrary, is a virgin page. Her father puts off the Count Paris, who sues for her hand, on account of her tender youth. But the alliance seems so honourable and useful to the clan, that the mother feels constrained to consult her child as to what she thinks of the proposal. She touches on the matter at first in a general way. "Tell me, daughter Juliet, how stands your disposition to be married?" With childlike indifference Juliet answers, "It is an honour that I dream not of." The nurse, with the freedom of an old and faithful servant, enters continually into

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the conversation, with stories and remarks of a more than doubtful character, such as to make us question whether she be the best companion for a young girl like Juliet. She praises her answer with comic admiration. Then, when the mother, pursuing the subject, mentions Count Paris as a suitor, nurse breaks out into extravagant praise. To the direct question of her mother, whether Juliet is well inclined to the young Count, whose physical and mental qualities she lauds enthusiastically, the daughter answers with pious and childlike obedience:

> I'll look to like, if looking liking move;
> But no more deep will I endart mine eye
> Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.

Who could suspect in this passionless, dutiful, obedient girl, the woman who, borne away by a tempest of passion, breaks resolutely every tie that bound her childhood, and with unshaken determination dares every terror of death and corruption, that she may belong to the man she loves? Most admirable is the poet's art, that forces us to consider this unexpected development as natural to Juliet's character, and as the outcome of the situation in which she is placed. Let us try to trace the sources of this art.

The event leading to the important meeting of the youthful pair, who at a first glance fall passionately in love, occurs in a perfectly natural manner. A brilliant masked ball is given in the Capulet house, to which the whole nobility of the city is invited. With youthful rashness, Romeo's companions start the idea of going to this ball. Romeo accompanies them, not for fun, or that he expects to enjoy the ball, but only to behold, from afar, his beloved Rosaline, who, outshining all the other belles, is sure to be present. But his heart is full of fearful presentiments as he enters the Capulet palace:

> My mind misgives
> Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date

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With this night's revels, and expire the term
Of a despised life closed in my breast
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
But He, that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail! On, lusty gentlemen.

Romeo and Juliet, act i. scene 4.

Only too soon is fulfilled that which his warning spirit forbode. With this evening his doom begins. The ball is at its height when the Montagues enter the hall. Tybalt, the wild passionate nephew of old Capulet, the principal fomenter of the implacable hatred between the houses, has recognised his enemies, and Romeo in particular. Enraged, he would fain fly at the intruders, but old Capulet, who will not break the sacred laws of hospitality even against his enemies, orders him sternly, and with praises of Romeo, to keep the peace. Tybalt is only quieted after furious resistance. The prophecy he utters in his suppressed rage against Romeo, "This intrusion shall, now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall," is fulfilled, though in a different fashion from what he expects. And now Romeo sees Juliet. He, who has gone to the ball to behold how far his Rosaline surpasses all others in beauty, at the first sight of this lovely creature, of whom he knows nothing, not even that she is the daughter of his enemy, forgets Rosaline, the whole world, everything, carried away by the magic of her loveliness:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

Romeo and Juliet, act i. scene 5.

We will quote the first words exchanged between Romeo and Juliet, to which the poet gives sonnet form:

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Rom. If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
Jul. Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss.
Rom. Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?
Jul. Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.
Rom. O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.
Jul. Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.
Rom. Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.
Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.
Jul. Then have my lips the sin that they have took.
Rom. Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
Give me my sin again.
Jul. You kiss by the book.

Romeo and Juliet, act i. scene 5.

In order to comprehend this first meeting between the lovers, we must rid our minds of the manners of our day, and transport ourselves into those in which a kiss, in midst of a large entertainment, was not only allowed in the highest classes in England, but was the most usual form of politeness. But the sudden manner in which the lovers, at the first moment of their meeting, abandon themselves to their love, and the continued renewal of these demonstrations throughout their connection to the last mournful catastrophe, awakes in us profound anxiety for their future. Juliet, when she sends her nurse to learn the name of the unknown youth, says something which betrays the full force of her suddenly kindled passion and the certainty that her whole future hangs upon it: "If he be married, the grave is like to be my wedding-bed." When she hears that Romeo belongs to the house of the foemen Montague, she recognises the full fatality that attends her love:

My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

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Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathed enemy.
Romeo and Juliet, act i. scene 5.

Romeo, too, when he learns that the lovely maiden Juliet is a Capulet, feels that fate has taken hold of him:

Is she a Capulet?
O dear account! my life is my foe's debt.

When Benvolio, in quite another temper, only conscious that the ball is losing its brightness, calls to him, "Away, begone! the sport is at the best!" Romeo answers, "Ay, so I fear; the more is my unrest." But the all-powerful, irresistible stream of passion overcomes in both hearts all anxiety concerning the future which lies before them, fateful and threatening, overshadowed by the enmity of their two houses. With bold resolution, Romeo, who asks, "Can I go forward when my heart is here?" climbs the wall of the Capulet's garden to seek *his sun*. His reserve towards his friends begins from this moment. He parts from them without giving them information about his movements. This secrecy later on results in important consequences for Juliet and him. Upon their first meeting, which so suddenly sent the shaft of love into their hearts, follows the interview in Juliet's balcony, that indissolubly knits the tie between them, and brings about the fateful resolution, dictated by their impatient passion, which brooks no delay, to become united without regarding the terrible obstacles that lie between them. In the whole mass of the world's literature there is no love-scene to be compared to this. This indeed seems to have been dictated by Love himself. As longing has brought Romeo over the wall, so the passionate heart of Juliet cannot find the rest she sought in the virgin chamber where yesterday she slept a harmless child. She steps out on the balcony, not in the hope of finding the beloved of her soul, but to confide to the still night her tempest-tossed, blissful, and yet anguished feelings. She

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feels painfully that she is in the grasp of an unrelenting fate. "Ah, me!" are the first words she utters to ease her oppressed heart. But she is firmly resolved, if Romeo returns her love, to dare everything, to tear herself free from all that chains and hems her in, to sever all family ties, and to live only for her love:

> O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
> Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
> Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
> And I'll no longer be a Capulet.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act ii. scene 2.

Romeo, of whose vicinity Juliet knows nothing, has listened entranced to the tender love confession of his sweetheart. When he appears, her first thought is of the danger he incurs, her first words are a warning, "If they do see thee, they will murder thee." Then she remembers, with blushes, which only "the mask of night" hide from him, that he, unknown to her, has heard her confession. But she does not retract it. She would, perhaps, had she not already spoken, "dwell on form," and delay to speak, but what she has said she will not recall, and he must return it with the confession of his own love. Full of touching tenderness is her entreaty that he will not "think her 'haviour light," and her promise to "prove more true, than those who have more cunning to be strange." Her nurse must, in garrulous fashion, have told her many tales of masculine unfaithfulness, for she knows that there is such a thing as false love. She says, "At lovers' perjuries, they say, Jove laughs." Therefore she dissuades him from swearing, or, if he will, he must not swear "by the moon, that monthly changes in her circled orb," but by his gracious self, that is the god of her idolatry. In all her happiness she is not free from timid doubts. Of this night's "too rash, too unadvised, too sudden" contract, she "has no joy." But her romantic all-trusting love repels the doubt

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as soon as it has arisen, for she wishes him "as sweet repose and rest as that within her breast." She says:

> My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
> My love as deep: the more I give to thee,
> The more I have, for both are infinite.

The nurse's call interrupts the lovers' talk. Juliet has time to assure him that if his bent of love be honourable, his purpose marriage, he is to send her word on the morrow by one that she'll procure to come to him, where and what time he will perform the rite. And all her fortunes at his foot she'll lay, and follow him, her lord, throughout the world. Once again she comes back to ask at what o'clock she shall send to him. But this is only a feint, because she cannot make up her mind to let him go. Amid romantic protestations they take a lingering leave, consoling themselves with the promise of a speedy meeting, and with the blissful hope of knitting ere long an indissoluble bond. Thus is this most important engagement undertaken. The pair of lovers who have found each other so early and so unexpectedly are determined, disregarding all obstacles, to contract an alliance which the deadly hatred between their two houses would seem to render impossible. In the earlier scenes there are phrases uttered which sound as if a reconciliation between the two families, founded on the irrevocable union of two members, might not be out of the question. Old Capulet says, "'Tis not hard, I think, for men so old as me to keep the peace." When his passionate nephew, Tybalt, wishes to attack the Montagues, he forbids him. An attempt at such reconciliation might not have been without result. But the evil star of the lovers will not permit their peaceful union. Sudden impulse and passionate haste remain the characteristic marks of their actions, and hence they themselves weave the net in which they are enmeshed, bringing them to a tragic end. Friar Lawrence, to whom Romeo hurries early on the following morning, to ask him

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to marry them secretly, blames the fickleness of his young friend, whom he left yesterday in the deepest love-grief about another, and now finds so glowing with passion for Juliet, that, despite the hatred between their two houses, he wishes to marry her clandestinely. Rosaline, said the old man, "knew well thy love did read by rote, and could not spell." But nevertheless, though all this haste and suddenness does not please him, he is willing to grant Romeo's request, because he nourishes a hope that by means of this union the old feud between the two houses, which has caused so much unhappiness, may be healed. But while acceding to Romeo's prayer, he censures with prophetic anxiety the boundless passionate haste with which he goes about the affair, speaking the words, "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast." And now, on the one hand, so ruled by his passion that he thinks of nothing else but obtaining as soon as possible its object, on the other, following another no less strong characteristic of his nature—determined impulse—Romeo commits the fatal blunder which is the starting-point of all the misery that befalls the pair. He arranges with the nurse that Juliet shall come that next afternoon to Friar Lawrence's cell to be married, but he conceals his secret from his friends. This reserve is heavily avenged. With passionate impatience Juliet watches for the nurse and the message she is to bring from Romeo, and when she comes at last, is almost driven mad by the delay caused by the old woman's discursive garrulity. An entrancing, soul-devouring bliss speaks but few words. Juliet greets the message, when at last she hears it, with the brief but important phrase, "Hie to high fortune! Honest nurse, farewell." When we ask, astonished, how a girl so young, who has as yet seen nothing of the world, and has had no companionship with men, can make up her mind so suddenly, without any virgin shame or terror, to a clandestine marriage, this scene with the nurse goes far to explain it. The nurse makes a very vulgar remark when

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going to fetch the rope-ladder by which Romeo is to climb that night to his bliss. Such a phrase sounds unfit for the ear of an innocent young girl. In connection with her talk before the fatal ball, we conclude that the plebeian old woman has not been in the habit of bridling her tongue even in Juliet's presence. The young lady must early and often have heard improper speeches, and thus learned much which girls of her age and innocence and purity do not generally know. Hence she declares herself willing to take the decisive step without hesitation, without reference to her past, or to the surroundings amid which she has grown up. The lovers meet at Friar Lawence's cell. In his passionate excitement Romeo rashly defies fortune:

> Amen, amen! but come what sorrow can,
> It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
> That one short minute gives me in her sight:
> Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
> Then love-devouring death do what he dare;
> It is enough I may but call her mine.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act ii. scene 6.

Love-destroying Death waits on the threshold to take the incautious youth at his word. The old monk warns him, in tones which recall the ancient Greek Chorus, against his passionate talk:

> These violent delights have violent ends
> And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
> Which as they kiss consume.

The marriage takes place. The love-drunken pair believe themselves to be on the threshold of Paradise. But already envious fortune is ready to destroy their too rapid dream of love and happiness. Already the avenging angel has bared the flaming sword that shall drive them for ever from their visioned Paradise. The unlucky results of Romeo's reserve begin to appear. The members of the two hostile houses meet again in the street, and, with the exception of the peacefully inclined Benvolio, all the Montagues rather seek

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than avoid the strife, knowing nothing of the possibility of any reconciliation. The furious Tybalt, who, ever since he was forced at the ball by his uncle's order to curb his anger at Romeo's intrusion, is so filled with rage against this very Romeo, that he puts off fighting with the others until Romeo himself appears. He flies at him, exclaiming, "Thou art a villain!" With a patience inexplicable to his friends, and blamed by them, Romeo answers, remembering what has just taken place, of which his friends know nothing:

> Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
> Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
> To such a greeting: villain am I none;
> Therefore farewell: I see thou know'st me not.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. scene 1.

Bitterly annoyed at Romeo's supposed cowardice, Mercutio taunts him for his "calm, dishonourable, vile submission," and draws his own sword against Tybalt, whom he defies with irritating phrases. In vain Romeo, who foresees the fatal influence this brawl will have upon his scarce blossomed happiness, tries to part the fighters. Mercutio falls, mortally wounded, is carried out, and Benvolio soon brings back the news that he has expired. Romeo already, before hearing the sad announcement, laments with profound grief the irreconcilable quarrel between the two families:

> This gentleman, the prince's near ally,
> My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt
> In my behalf; my reputation stain'd
> With Tybalt's slander,—Tybalt, that an hour
> Hath been my kinsman! O sweet Juliet,
> Thy beauty hath made me effeminate
> And in my temper soften'd valour's steel!
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. scene 1.

But now, when his friend has died for the insult Tybalt put upon Romeo, rage and thirst of vengeance seizes him. Tameless in fury, forgetting all prudence, his anger breaks forth wildly:

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Away to heaven, respective lenity,
And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!

Storming, he returns Tybalt's scorn, and after a brief combat strikes him dead at his feet. Hardly has the deed occurred than he perceives with horror that he has irrevocably destroyed his own happiness. Struck with dismay, he only says these words, "Oh, I am fortune's fool!" and at Benvolio's instance flies to escape the threatened consequences. The Prince, greatly angered by this fresh outbreak, which has cost the lives of two gentlemen, one of them his near relation, pronounces sentence of banishment upon Romeo, in spite of Benvolio's eloquent pleading, and in spite of the fact that Tybalt in his criminal attack was the person really to blame.

Meantime, Juliet, unconscious of these misfortunes, is awaiting her husband with glowing passion. As soon as the night falls he is to climb by a slender ladder to her chamber. We give the whole of the soliloquy in which she expresses her love-saturated longing, because it confirms our above-mentioned belief that Juliet, although she was a child but yesterday, has heard more and knows more than a girl of her age ought to hear or to know:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phœbus' lodging; such a waggoner
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
That runaways' eyes may wink, and Romeo
Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,
It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods;
Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love, grown bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.
Come, night; come, Romeo; come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night

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Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possess'd it, and, though I am sold,
Not yet enjoy'd: so tedious is this day
As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child that hath new robes
And may not wear them.

Romeo and Juliet, act iii. scene 2.

Abruptly is she precipitated out of this heaven, when her weeping nurse enters with the awful news that Romeo has slain Tybalt. Her whole being is shaken by the dreadful contrast of these bloody tidings with the passionate happiness to which she had just abandoned herself. She utters a speech which sounds strange, and yet is in keeping with her character. First she rages against Romeo:

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feather'd raven! wolvish-ravening lamb!
Despised substance of divinest show!
Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st,
A damned saint, an honourable villain!
O nature, what hadst thou to do in hell,
When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend
In mortal paradise of such sweet flesh?
Was ever book containing such vile matter
So fairly bound? O, that deceit should dwell
In such a gorgeous palace!

Romeo and Juliet, act iii. scene 2.

Then she abuses the nurse because she in her vulgar way chimes in with this, saying, "Shame come to Romeo! Blister'd be thy tongue for such a wish!" she replies, ending with the passionate anger against herself, so natural in such a character:

Ah! poor my lord, what tongue shall smooth thy name,
When I, thy three-hours wife, have mangled it?

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Victorious over all these warring feelings rises the star of love. Juliet forgets the mourning of her house, the death of her kinsman, the sorrow of her parents, when the thunderbolt "Romeo is banished" falls hard and crushing upon her ear, more terrible to her than if they told her that both her parents were dead. The sight of the ladder which is to bring her Romeo fills her with grief. She calls herself a widowed bride, to whom Death, not Romeo, will be husband. But the nurse, who, rough as she be, is filled with idolatrous love for her foster-child, promises that she will bring Romeo "to comfort her." Juliet replies, "Bid him come to take his last farewell." With wild untamable passion Romeo rages in Friar Lawrence's cell, where he is hidden, when he hears the sentence of banishment. Vainly the monk strives to quiet him. We already perceive the vehemence of his temperament, which is fated to drag him and his beloved to destruction. As, later on, when he believes Juliet dead, without stopping to ascertain the truth, he rushes blindly into the arms of death, so now, when the nurse, who has come to seek him, describes Juliet's distress, he lays hands upon himself for causing her grief. With stern reproof the Friar hinders his mad intent, saying, "Hast thou slain Tybalt? wilt thou slay thyself, and slay thy lady too, that lives in thee? A pack of blessings light upon thy back; thou pout'st upon thy fortune and thy love! Take heed, take heed, for such die miserable. Tybalt would kill thee, but thou slew'st Tybalt. And for his, thou art only banished. Go, get thee to thy love as was decreed, but look thou stay not till the watch be set.

> For then thou canst not pass to Mantua;
> Where thou shalt live, till we can find a time
> To blaze your marriage, reconcile your friends,
> Beg pardon of the prince, and call thee back
> With twenty hundred thousand times more joy
> Than thou went'st forth in lamentation."
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. scene 3.

Now, at last, Romeo says, "How well my comfort is

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revived by this!" The nurse goes to prepare Juliet for his advent, and Friar Lawrence promises to send him word by a trusty servant from time to time of news of "every good hap to him that chances" in Verona. But even before the poet introduces the bitter-sweet parting of the lovers, he shows us the fearful threatening storm-cloud that rises in the heaven of their love. Juliet's parents lend a favourable ear to the suit of the young Count Paris. Her father, who has no notion that his girl, hitherto so obedient and submissive, is capable of resisting his expressed will, settles that the marriage shall take place in three days. Unaware of this new misfortune, the most dreadful that has yet threatened them, the lovers abide together in their quiet bridal chamber. Their feelings are divided between love's entrancing bliss and the bitter pain of parting. The night is nearly over, the lark already warns them of the break of day. But Juliet will not let her lover leave her arms:

> It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
> That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;
> Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate-tree;
> Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. scene 5.

Romeo has to undeceive her: "It is the lark, no nightingale; he must begone and live, or stay and die." But if she chooses to keep him, let him be taken, let him be put to death, he is content. "Yon grey is not the morning's eye, 'tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow; he has more care to stay than will to go." But Juliet awakens from her dream. She says, "It is, it is the lark, that sings so out of tune, straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps. Hie hence! begone! away!" With sweet tender words they take leave, to meet no more in life, consoling one another with the hope of a brighter future. To her question, "O, thinkest thou we shall ever meet again?" he answers:

> I doubt it not; and all these woes shall serve
> For sweet discourses in our time to come.

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After Romeo has climbed out of the window on to the balcony, she speaks her sad forebodings plainly in these words:

> O God, I have an ill-divining soul!
> Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
> As one dead in the bottom of a tomb;
> Either my eyesight fails, or thou look'st pale.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. scene 5.

It is as if she foresaw the dark fate which with iron hand knocks at her chamber-door. It passes over the threshold in the person of her mother. She appears on the scene in a most unpleasant light. As a mother, her first and holiest duty should have been to protect her child from all contact with sin and wickedness. She should never, as this parent does, sow feelings of anger and revenge in her daughter's heart, trying to console her in her grief for the death of her cousin by promising her the murder by poison of the man who has killed him. Coldly and unfeelingly she meets the refusal with which her daughter unexpectedly receives the news that her marriage has been arranged without her knowledge or consent. How roughly she utters the wish, in which unconsciously she speaks the sentence so soon to be fulfilled, "I would the fool were married to her grave." And the father! In the wildest rage, with coarse abusive epithets, he answers Juliet's modest entreaty to pause. Nay, he goes so far as to threaten her with personal violence, until even the far from tender mother tells him "he is too hot." On her knees the poor child begs him to listen patiently to one word. In vain! He calls her a witch, says that they have a curse in having her, and leaves her, storming with fury, with these words:

> An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
> An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
> For, by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee,
> Nor what is mine shall never do thee good;
> Trust to't, bethink you; I'll not be forsworn.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. scene 5.

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It is indispensable to observe and explain the proceedings of Juliet's parents at this juncture, that we may clearly understand the reason for her subsequent action. Once more she turns with warm pleading to her mother, who has remained:

> Is there no pity sitting in the clouds,
> That sees into the bottom of my grief?
> O, sweet my mother, cast me not away!
> Delay this marriage for a month, a week;
> Or, if you do not, make the bridal bed
> In that dim monument where Tybalt lies.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act iii. scene v.

But the cold unfeeling mother leaves her in her distress with the words, "Do as thou wilt, for I will none of thee." Cast off by her unkind parents, she flies to her nurse, who knows why she cannot consent, and begs for some counsel in her despair. But the low-minded woman only advises her to give up Romeo and marry Paris. All the old and dear ties of her childhood are broken. The girl, at once tender and impatient, becomes a woman, a wife, a heroine. Suffering has taught her heroism, oppression has taught her dissimulation. She at once recovers her composure, her strength of mind. "Thou has comforted me marvellous much," she says to the nurse, and has prudence enough to invent a probable pretext for a visit to old Friar Lawrence to confess and to obtain absolution for her sin in offending her father. The nurse, whose vulgar mind has no measure for a nature like Juliet's, is delighted at her victory, and believes that she has brought over Juliet to her way of thinking. She willingly goes to tell her mother of the changed and submissive temper of the daughter. She does not perceive that the tie of affection which has bound her to her nursling's heart is for ever broken. "Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain," says Juliet, and hastens to Friar Lawrence, her last refuge. The words, "If all else fail, myself have power to die," show how one

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single hour has steeled a weak tender being to a heroism which shrinks from nothing that will enable her to keep true to her love. With words that are almost inspired she declares, in reply to Lawrence's tidings that he knows of a method of avoiding the marriage, but it "copes with death itself to 'scape from it," her immovable resolution to dare the very worst:

> O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
> From off the battlements of yonder tower;
> Or walk in thievish ways; or bid me lurk
> Where serpents are; chain me with roaring bears;
> Or shut me nightly in a charnel-house,
> O'er-cover'd quite with dead men's rattling bones,
> With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls;
> Or bid me go into a new-made grave
> And hide me with a dead man in his shroud;
> Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble;
> And I will do it without fear or doubt,
> To live an unstain'd wife to my sweet love.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, act iv. scene i.

The Friar gives her a little phial containing a draught which will throw her into a state resembling death for forty-two hours. She will then, after the custom of the country, be borne "in her best robes, uncovered, on the bier, to that same ancient vault where all the kindred of the Capulets lie." The Friar will manage that Romeo shall be in the vault when she awakes, and carry her off that very night to Mantua. Everything will go well if womanish fear abate not her valour in the acting. "Give me, O give me! tell me not of fear," says Juliet, resolved to defy the terrors of death, though her lively fancy paints them in such colours as nearly drive her mad.

A comparison of Juliet's monologue, as it is found in the source whence Shakespeare drew the play, "The Tragical History of Romeo and Juliet," taken from the Italian by Arthur Brooke, with that written by Shakespeare, furnishes a just idea of the relations in which he stood to the sources of his plays. He follows it in outward circumstances, even into details, but knows how to elevate and ennoble the

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rough material. Hence we are dealing with no imitation, but with a new and independent work of genius.* Brooke has: "I must now take the draught, that I have here, of which I know not the effect or strength;" and upon this comes another doubt: "Who knows whether this powder will work earlier or later than it should, or perhaps not at all? Then my cunning would be laid open to the world, and I should be the scorn and laughing-stock of all. And further, how can I tell if some snake or other evil beast or worm might not hurt me as I lie there as if dead? It is said that they abide in dark holes under the earth, and that they are often found in graves. Or how shall I, brought up in the fresh air, endure the pestilential breath of that abode of half-rotten corpses and long-buried bones, where all my ancestors lie, in the grave of my whole race? Will not the Friar and my Romeo, when they come, find me stifled, even if I awake too soon?" While she hesitates over these thoughts, the power of her imagination becomes so strong, that she thinks she sees Tybalt's corpse rise out of the grave, dreadful to behold, as she saw him a few days before, lying dead in a pool of blood. Her tender limbs tremble with terror, her golden hair stands upright on her head, and, oppressed by fear, a cold sweat breaks out upon her skin. It seems as if a thousand corpses surrounded her, threatening to tear her to pieces. But when she begins to feel that her strength is failing, that terror is taking possession of her heart, that

* A very important witness to the manner in which Shakespeare handled his material may be found in the close of the balcony scene in the second act. Brooke makes Juliet utter this mild but practical speech: "If you seek to betray my honour, you are further from your aim than ever. But if your thoughts are pure, and marriage is the end and aim of your wishes, I will not count the obedience I owe my parents, nor the years that our houses have been at strife, but give myself to you; I and mine will renounce my father's house, following you wherever you go. But if through light love and ill-meant wooing thou seekest to pluck the tender fruit of my maidenhood in its ripeness, thou doest wrong. Then thy Juliet prays thee to give up thy suit and leave her with her own people." Out of this Shakespeare makes the simple prayer: "O gentle Romeo, if thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully."

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cowardice may hinder the execution of her purpose, she seizes the phial, and, as if driven by madness, she swallows the potion hastily without further reflection. Then she crosses her slender arms upon her breast, and unconsciousness comes over her. Compare this with Shakespeare:

Come, vial.
What if this mixture do not work at all?
Shall I be married then to-morrow morning?
No, no: this shall forbid it; lie thou there.
(*Laying down her dagger.*)
What if it be a poison, which the Friar
Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd,
Because he married me before to Romeo?
I fear it is: and yet, methinks, it should not,
For he hath still been tried a holy man.
How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? there's a fearful point!
Shall I not, then, be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there die strangled e'er my Romeo comes?
Or, if I live, is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place,—
As in a vault, an ancient receptacle,
Where, for these many hundred years, the bones
Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd;
Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,
Lies festering in his shroud; where, as they say,
At some hours in the night spirits resort;—
Alack, alack, is it not like that I,
So early waking, what with loathsome smells,
And shrieks like mandrakes' torn out of the earth,
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad:—
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears?
And madly play with my forefathers' joints?
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud?
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?
O, look! methinks I see my cousin's ghost
Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
Upon a rapier's point; stay, Tybalt, stay!
Romeo, I come! this do I drink to thee.

Romeo and Juliet, act iv. scene 3.

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When the nurse enters the next morning to wake and dress her for the marriage, she finds her lying on her couch in a trance which looks like death. She deems her dead, and wakes the house with her loud lamentations. Father, mother, bridegroom, hasten in, and burst into passionate and despairing outcries. The Friar bids them moderate their grief, and consoles them with the thought—"She's best married that dies married young." The beautiful corpse is solemnly interred in the family vault of the Capulets. A fatal chance upsets the monk's plan of bringing Romeo from Mantua just at the right moment to receive the waking Juliet in his loving arms. The unlucky haste of a servant carries the news to Romeo that Juliet is dead. With the passionate impulse that is the ruling spirit of his character and the cause of his tragic fate, he resolves, without further investigation, to slay himself, buys poison from a starving apothecary, hurries to the grave where Juliet lies to all appearance dead, and kills himself, after he has slain the Count Paris, who has come to the grave to weep once more over the bride whom death has torn from him. The Friar enters the vault to bear the awakened Juliet to the shelter of a cloister until her husband can arrive. To his horror he finds the corpse of Romeo lying at the foot of the monument. Juliet awakes: "Where is my Romeo?" is her first question. The Friar answers, "Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead." That is enough —no accusation, no question, no request. Nothing is left for her but death, and she dies. So these immortal lovers, innocent, loving and beloved, descend together into their grave. But this grave is not the abode of rage or of despair. It is the altar of a holy love. Shakespeare has omitted a terribly tragic bit existing in the material of his play. Here Juliet awakes before Romeo has drawn his last breath. The lovers die with the terrible consciousness that their fatal haste has deprived them of a long and happy life of love. Shakespeare has at least spared to Romeo this grief, and he did wisely to omit this effect, so

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actively exploited by the musical setters of the fable, to the real martyrdom of their hearers. Romeo and Juliet are as lovely in death as in life; their pain, the fearful tragedy of their fortunes, seems transfigured in the wonderful manner in which it is set before us. We leave their grave with deep sorrow, but without that horror which the redoubled agony of their despairing death would have left. The highest, most ideal aim of tragedy is here attained. Over their grave the hostile houses clasp hands in peace. The personages themselves perish through the power of fate and of their own passions, but above their tomb rises triumphantly victorious the eternal immortally true ideal of love, of peace, and pardon.

"THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

Portia—Nerissa—Jessica

Mrs. Jameson, who has written a valuable work on the characteristics of Shakespeare's women, places Portia in the *Merchant of Venice*, Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Rosalind in *As You Like It*, in one group which she defines as intellectual. By this she does not mean that in these lovely womanly characters intelligence is developed at the expense of the heart, but that, in conjunction with worth and lovable qualities, intellect is pre-eminent in their composition. This highly developed intellect is glorified in Portia by a truly poetic and romantic feeling, ennobled in Isabella by profound faith, enlivened in Beatrice by sparkling wit, dazzling and striking in the former, mild and gentle in the latter. As testimony to the poet's creative fancy, each is alike admirable, so that we scarcely know whom to admire most. Regarded, however, as real women, we must recognise Portia as the most perfect, because she possesses in a higher degree the noble womanly qualities.

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She comes nearest to a perfect ideal of lovely and cultivated womanhood. Shakespeare drew the material of the *Merchant of Venice* from two different sources, and as usual reveals his master-hand in the way he has interwoven the fables. The story of Antonio and Bassanio is taken from an Italian tale called *Il Mercatante di Venetia*, the casket trial from the *Gestis Romanorum*. The figure of Portia, as we find her in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, is, however, absolutely his own. He found in the source whence he drew, a cunning sorceress, a species of Circe, who deals in magic draughts. Out of this he created that splendid picture of womanhood whose whole being glows with a majestic charm; a ray of the purest, divinest loveliness, Portia stands at the highest, most brilliant summit of life. She has been reared in princely opulence, tended with loving devotion; no care has neared her, no cloud has dimmed the heaven of her life. Her first grief was the death of her tender solicitous father, to whom she was devoted, and who, as long as he lived, did everything to develop, by careful training and education, the noble qualities of her heart and brilliant gifts of her intellect. But this same devoted father by his last will placed his daughter in a singular and painful position. He removed the most important step of her life, on which her whole future fate would hang, entirely out of the sphere of her will, causing it to depend on a curious riddle. Three caskets of gold, silver, and lead are placed at Belmont, Portia's princely residence; her suitors must choose between these caskets. Whoever selects the right one will find Portia's portrait inside, and become the fortunate winner of her hand and property. She is bound over in no way to influence a suitor in his choice. Before he selects, each one must swear that if he chooses wrongly he will leave Belmont at once, never to woo any other lady, never to divulge which casket he had drawn, or what was its contents. These behests at first sight seem to belong to the class of over-subtle and tyran-

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nical provisions by means of which parents grown weak-minded or imperious, through the unhesitating obedience of their children, persist in ruling them even from the grave. But upon reflection, it appears in a different light. The father who has reared a being so noble as Portia must himself have been a superior man, gifted with high qualities of intellect and heart. His daughter's profound grief also testifies to this. Neither weakness of mind nor tyrannical obstinacy, a desire to extend authority beyond the limits of the grave, can be the motive for this singular will, which seems to place the future fate of a daughter wholly in the hands of capricious fortune. It is through this behest that the father hopes to remove her fate from the grasp of blind fortune. He foresaw that an heiress so highly gifted by nature and wealth would be besieged by innumerable suitors, of whom many would be unworthy, seeking only her riches or physical beauty. From such suitors he wished to protect her. He wanted to prevent her throwing herself, dazzled perchance by outward charms, into the arms of an inferior. He wished that only the noble unselfish love of a man truly worthy should win the prize. To this end he imagined the riddle of the three caskets. Portia's portrait he placed in the least attractive, the leaden box. He felt assured that the unworthy suitors, those who sought only Portia's beauty or heritage, would never guess her high-minded father's meaning, would never select the right casket. Only true and faithful love divines what true and faithful love has imagined. The result proves that Portia's father understood human nature aright in its strength and its weakness. We recognise that this was the poet's conception of the father's intention from the words of the clever and charming handmaid, Nerissa, who sees through the cunning of the old lord: "Your father was ever virtuous, and holy men at their death have good inspirations; therefore the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests, of gold, silver, and lead (whereof who chooses his meaning

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chooses you), will no doubt never be chosen by any rightly, but one who you shall rightly love," and who is worthy of that love, we may venture to add. Nevertheless, Portia for the moment is in a difficult and unpleasant position. She is followed by a troop of admirers, of whom she "cannot choose one nor refuse none." She does not feel inclined to prefer one to another, as is shown by her criticisms when conversing about them with Nerissa. With acute but harmless wit, which reveals the humorous side of her character in an amiable light, she sketches each in a manner that proves how not one is really worthy of her costly prize. Nerissa consoles her with the assurance, that she is so convinced of the favourable issue of the casket trial, that she has been assured all these suitors will renounce their suit sooner than risk the hazard.

Consoled by this news, Portia announces her fixed determination,—to be expected of such a daughter,—to abide by her father's decision. At the same time, she announces that she is glad to be rid of her horde of suitors. "If I live to be as old as Sybilla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable; for there is not one of them but I dote on his absence, and I pray God to grant them a fair departure." But when Nerissa mentions the young Venetian Bassanio, who visited the house in her father's time, with warm praise, Portia's answer, "I remember him well, and remember him worthy of thy praise," shows that here a chord had been touched that finds an echo in Portia's heart. Perhaps she would be pleased if this youth entered the lists and were successful. But Portia is not long relieved from uninvited wooers; hardly has the door closed upon the departing pack, when a new one, the Prince of Morocco, is announced. Meanwhile this very Bassanio mentioned by Nerissa is bestirring himself in Venice. He has left his heart at Belmont, and would fain set out thither to claim the precious guerdon. Here the

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second and terribly serious action of the drama joins on to the romantic world enclosed in Belmont. Bassanio is no vicious or profligate spendthrift, but, with free-handed rashness, he has led a gay and expensive life, and has over "disabled his estate." The best witness the poet gives us to his character is the warm, true, self-sacrificing friendship which the noble Antonio, whom men call in Venice "the royal merchant," feels for him. He has often helped him already, and Bassanio is deep in his debt. Therefore, when Bassanio wishes to appear properly attended at Belmont, and needs a sum of money far beyond his present means, he turns to Antonio. Not daring to speak openly, he tries to approach his purpose in a roundabout manner, but Antonio with touching nobleness loosens his tongue, saying that he is ready to do for him all that lies in his power:

> You know me well, and herein spend but time
> To wind about my love with circumstance;
> And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
> In making question of my uttermost
> Than if you had made waste of all I have;
> Then do but say to me what I should do
> That in your knowledge may by me be done,
> And I am prest unto it: therefore, speak.
>
> *Merchant of Venice*, act i. scene 1.

Bassanio confidingly opens his heart. He relates that at Belmont he "did receive" from Portia's eyes "fair speechless messengers," and that if he only had the means to join the ranks of her numerous and brilliant suitors, he hopes that his wooing might not be unsuccessful. Antonio explains that his wealth is all at sea, and that for the moment he has not the sum required in ready money, but that his credit is good in Venice, and he is willing to pledge it to Bassanio for the sum he asks. Now the evil genius of the piece, Shylock, the old Jew, comes on the scene. Two passions sway his whole being, avarice and thirst of

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vengeance. Riches are not to him, as to Portia, a means whereby he may spread joy and comfort around him, but an end in themselves, before which all other pursuits, even love for his only child, give way. Antonio must often have taunted and ill-treated him, and, what is in his eyes still more unpardonable, has lent money without interest, and so lowered the rate of usury. He says:

> I hate him for he is a Christian,
> But more for that in low simplicity
> He lends out money gratis and brings down
> The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
> If I can catch him once upon the hip,
> I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
> He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,
> Even there where merchants most do congregate,
> On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,
> Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,
> If I forgive him.—*Merchant of Venice*, act i. scene 3.

A devilish plan takes shape in his mind when Bassanio comes to borrow 3000 ducats upon Antonio's security, at three months' date. The more securely to entrap Antonio, he simulates benevolence and forgiveness; he will lend the money without interest; only as a pretext, in play, the merchant shall give a bond, in which he gives Shylock the right, if he cannot pay the requisite sum at the right time, to cut a pound of flesh from any part he likes of the merchant's body. In spite of Bassanio's opposition, impelled by an inward presentiment against the idea of allowing Antonio to sign a document which sounds so dangerous, Antonio consents, because on the one hand he believes it is certain that the ships which carry his whole fortune will have arrived by the stated time; on the other, his whole artless spirit is convinced of Shylock's good intentions, and can credit no man capable of a trick so vile. Bassanio is thus put in possession of the money necessary for his expedition, and prepares for it with zeal and magnificence. While Shylock is so cunningly laying his plan for the de-

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struction of his enemy, the action commences which is to frustrate his schemes and bring about his own ruin. Taking the opportunity of this journey to Belmont, Lorenzo, a friend of Bassanio's, carries off Jessica, the Jew's only daughter, from her father's house. Given over entirely to avarice, Shylock has never won the heart of his beautiful and amiable child. The warm-blooded girl, full of the joy of living, is kept a close prisoner, no youthful amusement is allowed to her, she has no intercourse with girl friends; in a word, the house which should have been for her a happy and peaceful home is turned into a hell. So she seizes without reflection the chance which the love of the young Lorenzo offers, he having, in spite of her father's tyrannical isolation, found a way to set her free from her prison.

The religion in which she was bred has no hold on her, since it has not influenced her father in any way for good. This father's daily example, which only showed her, avarice, hatred, and an idolatrous worship of the golden calf, has stunted her moral sense, so that she does not hesitate to carry away with her a large share of his property, wounding him thereby in his tenderest point.

While in Venice, the net is woven which shall entangle a noble man in meshes. Two new suitors arrive at Belmont, the Prince of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon. With dignified self-control Portia meets them. The wild, passionate, and vain-glorious nature of the former, who seeks to recommend himself to a refined and delicate lady by boasting of his bloody deeds of valour, disgust the young girl as much as the absurd self-conceit of the second. But her father's wisdom reveals itself in a brilliant light. They each choose a wrong casket. "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath," is the inscription on the leaden casket. Morocco will not hear of the unassuming lead. "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves," is written on the casket of silver. The Moor considers himself entitled

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to this, but the inscription on the golden one, "Who chooseth me shall gain what many desire," decides him to open that instead. The lady's portrait is concealed inside the casket that will win her.

A man who, like Morocco, attaches such importance to outside semblance, cannot credit that the lady's picture can be enshrined in any casing so common as lead. Even silver is not worthy of such contents. Only gold beseems such a jewel, and the golden one is his choice. Instead of Portia's portrait, he finds a skull, with a scroll telling him that if "he was as wise as he is bold" he might have won Portia.

The conceited Prince of Arragon, too, sets his deserts so high that he chooses the silver casket. He finds a fool's head, and must, to Portia's heartfelt satisfaction, betake himself off. Hardly, however, are these unfortunate wooers gone, before he is announced whose Portia's secret longing has desired ever since her fortune hung upon this chance, and who, she heartily wishes, may successfully read the riddle dictated by love.

Infinitely touching and sweet is the anxiety with which Portia awaits Bassanio's choice. With calm indifference she looked forward to the trial of the unwelcome suitors, in full confidence in her father's wisdom in setting them this enigma. But now that her heart speaks for Bassanio, that she feels how her happiness or misery will be decided in the next few minutes, painful anxiety takes hold of her, her trust is shaken in the success of the game upon which so great a prize is wagered. She lets Bassanio read her heart, she longs to give him ever so small a sign, but her reverence for her father's will makes this impossible. With profound tenderness, yet with manly resolution, Bassanio begs her to let him choose at once. Portia gives him the right answer:

> Away, then! I am lock'd in one of them:
> If you do love me you will find it out.

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This was what her father meant, and thus his will is gloriously fulfilled. While at Portia's orders soft and sweet music is played, Bassanio stands communing with himself before the caskets. Only a true man, the father had said, would pass over the gleaming gold, the shimmering silver, and choose the dull unattractive lead.

Speaking of his hopes, Bassanio, who truly and warmly loves the sweet Portia, and who has also won her heart, says:

> Thou gaudy gold,
> Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee;
> Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge
> 'Tween man and man; but thou, thou meagre lead,
> Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught,
> Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence;
> And here choose I: joy be the consequence!
>
> *Merchant of Venice*, act iii. scene 2.

It is the consequence: he finds Portia's portrait, and the beloved is won.

With overflowing happiness Portia sees the fortunate decision of her life's riddle. With touching humility and submission she gives herself and her possessions to Bassanio in words we quote since they furnish deep insight into the character of this lovable and womanly creation:

> You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
> Such as I am; though for myself alone
> I would not be ambitious in my wish,
> To wish myself much better; yet, for you
> I would be trebled twenty times myself;
> A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
> More rich;
> That only to stand high in your account,
> I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
> Exceed account; but the full sum of me
> Is sum of something, which, to term in gross
> Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised;
> Happy in this, she is not yet so old
> But she may learn; happier than this,
> She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
> Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit

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Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
Myself and what is mine to you and yours
Is now converted: but now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
This house, these servants and this same myself
Are yours, my lord; I give them with this ring;
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

Merchant of Venice, act iii. scene 2.

All the lovely qualities of a noble and ideal wife shine through these words. The young lady, dowered with all the best physical and intellectual gifts, who brings to her lover an immense fortune, speaks to him whom she thus endows, with the most touching modesty. Of all her qualities, the power to improve and become more worthy of him seems to her the highest. His will shall rule her in all things. She asks nothing of him but true and faithful love, symbolised by a ring she puts on his finger, which he is to keep as an inalienable pledge, even as a talisman of wedded happiness. In the fifth act this ring becomes the subject of a charming comedy.

While the happiness of this noble pair is assured, two other hearts have found each other. Graziano, the lively, bold companion of Bassanio, and Nerissa, the lovable, faithful *suivante* of Portia, have promised to love each other; but the maiden subjects her consent to the same condition as that of Portia, and the fortunate issue of Bassanio's choice has brought about also the happiness of his friend. But already the tempest begins to lower over the lovers, their sky is filled with threatening clouds. With Lorenzo and Jessica comes from Venice Salano, bringing a letter from Antonio, "of so shrewd import as to steal the colour from Bassanio's cheek." An unexpected and terrible thing has happened. All Antonio's vessels, bearing his whole fortune, have gone down. The fatal bond which

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Shylock holds has fallen due. Antonio is not in a position to set himself free by repaying it, and the cruel Jew insists on the literal fulfilment of his bond, unmoved by the entreaties of the most important merchants, the senators, the Doge himself. Jessica says she has often heard her father swear "that he would rather have Antonio's flesh than twenty times the value of the sum that he did owe him." If right, power, and wisdom do not move him, Antonio's life is in the greatest danger. But the magnanimity of the noble man is unshaken. In his letter to Bassanio he writes: "Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit; and since, in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are cleared between you and I, if I might but see you at my death; notwithstanding use your pleasure; if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letters." A man able to win and keep such a friend is indeed the only man worthy of a wife like Portia. The character of this lady, whose amiable side only we have hitherto beheld, now rises to the highest point of self-sacrifice and magnanimity of which a noble woman is capable. It is painful to her of course to part from her beloved husband on the very day of their marriage, but she does not hesitate an instant. She thinks not of herself, but only of the noble, generous friend, to whom she and Bassanio owe their happiness, and whose life is now threatened by his vindictive foe. She will not stop one moment to enjoy her happiness before everything possible has been done to save this true friend. She urges Bassanio, since their marriage has given him full right over her person and property, to go without delay to his friend's assistance; she places her whole fortune at his disposal, nor does she stop here. After Bassanio and his friend have hastened to Venice, she cannot abide to remain idle at home, awaiting the result of the attempt to save Antonio. Her brave noble heart compels her to aid in the rescue of this inestimable man. She goes to work with all the determination of her

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character. Her acute intellect conceives a plan. A faithful servant is sent to her uncle, the renowned doctor of law, Bellario of Padua, with the order to bring all the garments and documents he will send to the "common ferry that leads to Venice." She hastens away with Nerissa, after confiding her house to the care of Lorenzo and his young wife Jessica, who have fled to Belmont from Venice. At this serious moment it is wonderful to note the overflowing humour with which she discusses a project that seems so extraordinary and difficult for a lady. Her sunny cheerful temperament never fails this wonderful woman, even in her gravest enterprises. The exalted wisdom that dwells in her is never stern or gloomy, she is lifted above the sordid cares of life, she lives in the ampler ether, the diviner air of a self-controlled and self-comprehending spirit.

Meantime a dreadful tragedy is preparing in Venice, threatening the happiness of so many noble spirits. Shylock, with the implacability of a hardened temper filled with hatred, insists upon the literal fulfilment of his bond. Antonio's misfortune was his only consolation in the ill-luck which befell himself through his daughter's flight; he does not mourn the loss of his child, but the treasures she carried off and spent during her journey with her self-chosen husband in the most extravagant way. He says, "Would that my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear; would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin." Antonio must pay for all. The legal force of the "merry bond," and his universally known incapability to pay the money, has delivered him unarmed into the hands of the Jew. In the trial which takes place, under the presidency of the Doge, where Shylock opposes Antonio, who appears surrounded by his mourning friends, the noble merchant, though he has renounced every hope of rescue from his merciless enemy, never loses, even for a moment, his composure and self-control. Shylock remains deaf to all

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representations, he refuses to accept double the sum due, he rejects with cruel scorn every appeal to his pity. To all accusations against his hard-heartedness he replies with bitter and skilful sophism; he takes his stand upon his rights as a citizen, which every burgher may appeal to; takes his stand upon his bond, and nothing else, for it remains lawful and unassailable until they "can rail the seal from off it." The situation is strained to the highest pitch, the tragic catastrophe seems unavoidable. The Doge and his court of justice would fain save Antonio, but their hands are tied by the law, which is plainly on Shylock's side, and which they cannot break without shaking the foundations on which rest the greatness of Venice. The intense excitement prepares us for the appearance of Portia, who brings salvation in a practical way. At Shylock's monstrous request that the sentence may be immediately pronounced, the Doge answers that the verdict can be delayed until the opinion of the famous doctor of law, Bellario, has been taken on the case. While Shylock, with hellish triumph, whets his knife "to cut the forfeiture from the bankrupt," Nerissa, dressed like a clerk, brings a letter from Bellario, saying that he himself is sick, but that he sends in his place the young doctor of laws, Balthazar, who knows his opinion, and upon whose wisdom and judicial learning they may depend. Portia now enters disguised as a lawyer. Although each of the former scenes have shown her in an amiable and interesting light, yet the following, the scene in court, is that in which her highest characteristics are displayed. Here her whole divine personality appears; here her high spirit, her noble womanly wisdom comes to view. The painful uncertainty and anxiety in which she at first leaves the court, the defendant, and his friends, is not given by the poet simply for effect, but of necessity. Portia desires not only to rescue Antonio, but also to assure her husband's honour by paying his debt, and therefore desires to be indebted to everything for the rescue before she tries the quibble in law to which

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she ultimately has recourse. So, after recognising the force of the bond, and receiving Antonio's personal declaration, she turns to Shylock with the incomparable appeal for mercy:

> The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest;
> It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
> 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
> The throned monarch better than his crown;
> His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
> The attribute to awe and majesty,
> Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings:
> But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
> It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
> It is an attribute to God himself;
> And earthly power doth then show likest God's
> When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
> Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
> That, in the course of justice, none of us
> Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
> And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
> The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
> To mitigate the justice of thy plea;
> Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
> Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.
>
> *Merchant of Venice*, act iv. scene i.

But that Shylock, who wished to "see his daughter dead at his foot, and the stolen ducats in her coffin," has no ears for such music. Then she addresses herself to his avarice, and bids him "take thrice the money, let me tear the bond." But the passion for revenge conquers even that which has until now been strongest in Shylock's strong heart, the thirst for gold. Portia gravely puts aside Bassanio's entreaty that the court should, "to do a great right, do a little wrong," and "wrest once the law to their authority." Upon the strict observance of the law rests the safety of the state, "no power in Venice can alter a decree established—it cannot be," she says. Triumphantly Shylock praises the wisdom of the young judge as "a second Daniel come to

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judgment." Portia still delays pronouncing a verdict, but, with well-balanced prudence, with admirable skill, she first allows Shylock to refuse the offer of the sum, counted out three times, in order that, when he sees later on that things are going against him and his victim will escape, he may not claim what he has refused in open court. With the same clear foresight, Portia gives the Jew the opportunity to show his cruelty, his ferocious longing for his enemy's blood, in the most terrible light. Indeed, she draws him on. Hence when he, the merciless, is caught in his own net, he finds that he has deprived himself of all claim upon the mercy or grace of others. She warns Antonio seriously that he must prepare for death. "Lay bare," she says, "your bosom," provoking from Shylock the wild-beast cry which makes him hateful to all:

> Ay, his breast:
> So says the bond: doth it not, noble judge?
> 'Nearest his heart:' these are the very words.

With eagerness he displays the scales he has brought to weigh the flesh. With the same wise intention of placing in a clear light Shylock's monstrous cruelty, and to establish his determination to cling to the letter of the bond, she asks him "to have by some surgeon, on his charge, to stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death." With demoniac coldness, Shylock, who always falls into the traps set, asks: "Is it so nominated in the bond? I cannot find it: it is not in the bond." In fine contradiction to his extreme and unfeeling hardness of heart stand the mild and noble words with which Antonio, with certain death before his eyes, takes a last leave of his friends. Bassanio "must not grieve that he has fallen into this for him." He says fortune herein shows herself kind, for she will not "let him outlive his wealth to view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow an age of poverty." Doubly touching is the message he sends to the wife of the young friend, for whom he is about to lay down his life,

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unconscious that she is present. How proud and blest must Portia have felt in the possession of a husband able to win such a friendship, true even to death, when she hears Antonio say:

> Commend me to your honourable wife;
> Tell her the process of Antonio's end;
> Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death;
> And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge
> Whether Bassanio had not once a love.
>
> *Merchant of Venice*, act iv. scene 1.

The terrible tragedy at this moment is agreeably softened by the humour of the short conversation which follows between Bassanio and Gratiano on the one hand, and their disguised wives on the other, the fun of which is known only to the women, while the men are speaking in bitter earnest. The two young husbands both declare that they would offer up their wives, dearly as they love them, to deliver Antonio from "that devil." Playfully the women reply, that they would get little thanks for their offer, if their wives happened to be by to hear them make it. But Portia knows how to value the feeling which lies beneath Bassanio's words. Far from being angered because in this moment of agony he puts his friend above his wife, she loves him all the more, knowing that such a friend will make the best of husbands. Now comes the verdict. Shylock has scornfully repelled every chance offered him of obtaining grace either through pity or avarice. He has shown himself in all his fiendishness, in the whole hellish energy of his criminal will, in the complete nakedness of his nature, hardened against every noble movement of humanity. Portia annihilates him, as he clings literally to his bond, through the very literal meaning of that bond. "Yes," she says, "a pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine; the law allows it, and the court awards it." Shylock prepares to rush upon his enemy, when, like a bolt from the clear sky, Portia calls upon him to

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Tarry a little; there is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood:
The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh:'
Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice.

Merchant of Venice, act iv. scene i.

The passage from the deepest, most hopeless despair to the highest delight at this unexpected turn of things is wonderful. As if freed from the weight of an alp, every soul in court draws a breath of relief. Deeply moved, his friends surround and embrace the rescued Antonio. With bitter mockery, justified by the agony of anxiety which he has undergone, Gratiano flings in the face of the shocked and irresolute Jew his own expression, repeated more than once in triumph at Portia's former legal decision—"O, upright judge! Mark, Jew! A learned judge." Shylock, who sees the gratification of his vengeance slipping away from him, allows his other ruling passion, avarice, to awake. To his timid question, "Is that the law?" Portia answers:

Thyself shall see the act;
For, as thou urgest justice, be assured
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest.

He then says he is willing to accept the offer of the threefold sum, and Bassanio is ready to pay it to him. But now Portia's foresight appears successfully. The Jew, she says, has asked for his rights, he shall have them, nothing more, but he must be careful to cut "just a pound of flesh; if he takes more, nay, if the scale do turn but in the estimation of a hair, he dies, and all his goods are confiscate." Trapped thus by his avarice as well as by his bloodthirstiness, Shylock falls back upon this request—"Give me my principal, and let me go." But the whole weight of the vengeance which, with criminal defiance, he called down on his own

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head when, resisting every appeal, he called out passionately, "My deeds upon my head, I claim the law," is now to fall upon him. Portia, who knew well what she was about when she let him speak before the court, refusing the offer of the money, coolly answers:

> He hath refused it in the open court:
> He shall have merely justice and his bond.

As he tries to depart snarling, the last crushing blow falls from Portia's lips: "Tarry, Jew, the law hath yet another hold on you. It is enacted in the laws of Venice, that if any alien, by direct or indirect attempts, seek the life of any citizen, half his goods are forfeit to the party against whom he doth contrive, the other half to the State, and his life lies in the mercy of the Doge." Shylock now falls under the enactment of this law, for he has indirectly, and directly too, sought Antonio's life. "Down therefore and beg mercy of the Duke." The Duke grants him his life, "before he asks it," but condemns him to pay half his property to Antonio, the other half to the State "which humbleness," he says, "may drive into a fine." The raging despair that now breaks forth from Shylock shows the whole nature of the man, who all his life has known no God but Mammon, and sees himself deprived of this sole basis of existence through his own fault:

> Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:
> You take my house when you do take the prop
> That doth sustain my house; you take my life
> When you do take the means whereby I live.
>
> *Merchant of Venice*, act iv. scene 1.

Antonio promises to leave the half of Shylock's goods that are to fall to him to Lorenzo and Jessica, and begs the Duke to quit the fine for one half of his goods, on condition, first, "that presently he do become a Christian;" second, that he shall "record a gift there in the court of all

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he dies possessed, unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter." The Doge compels the Jew to do this, or else he will recant the pardon he has pronounced. Shylock, overpowered and crushed, quits the court, after assenting to everything. Thus has Portia splendidly fulfilled her task of not remaining an idle spectator of the rescue of him to whom she owes her happiness, on which she had set herself with such noble resolution. She has torn the victim, already given up for lost, from out the claws of the foe who seized him with devilish cunning and cruelty. She has reversed this doom, so that it has fallen crushing upon the wretch's head.

We must accord a few words to this solution of the process at law, which certainly satisfies our moral sense, but seems, at a superficial glance, to be the result of a sophistical quibble. Portia does not compel the Jew to renounce his bond; he may take his pound of flesh, but at his own risk, for the bond gives him a pound of flesh only. But it is obvious that to cut a pound of flesh from a living man entails, of necessity, the shedding of his blood, and the law of Venice, in common with that of every civilised land, forbids this. There is therefore a contradiction between the law which permits such a contract, and the higher one that prohibits the shedding of blood. Here, therefore, we have document against document, letter against letter, in which the weakness and imperfection of human legislation is made apparent, and thus opportunity is given for the solution of the dark problem, which, a moment before, seemed to promise so truly tragic an ending. Portia seeks and finds that which does not annul the bond, but hinders its execution.

The reasonableness and poetic justice of the solution appears to be unmistakable. There is in the discovery and application of this point of law nothing unjudicial, nothing unreasonable.

Antonio is saved through Portia's wisdom—not through

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that of the law, but rather through its weakness, because it had a Shylock to deal with. If the Jew's selfishness had not equalled his hate, he might have flung his own life into the scale to destroy his enemy, and the law would not have hindered him; but he could not rise to this pitch of resolution. Portia foresaw this, and calculated upon it.

Whether Shylock was baptized or not, in fulfilment of the sentence, we do not know, as he does not appear again in the drama.

The closing impression left by the play is the triumph of love over selfishness.

In the hall of justice in Venice, as in the hall of decision in Belmont, the same fundamental idea is put symbolically before us. Love is strong, selfishness weak; the one attains what the other misses. Love solves the dark riddles of life, bringing forth from a shadowed present a bright future; finds a way of issue, when even justice can give no further aid. Love, too, is the only fundamental power of life; without it there is no understanding life's problems, no sure groundwork for society, no happiness, no future. Love stands upon the basis of true justice, for it is the fundamental law of life. Hate stands only upon the semblance of justice, for it undermines the foundations of life. Therefore love must be victorious through Almighty power; hatred, however, and selfishness, proudly and vindictively though they demean themselves, must fall through their own weakness, despite all appearances.

We must devote a few words to the fifth act and the amusing comedy of the rings. The drama required a pleasant ending and a humorously romantic one. The wonderful garden scene in the fifth act might be defined as roguish, so full is it of twinkling humour, of serio-comic pleasantry and light-hearted banter. Bassanio loves his wife as his own life, her love is his bliss, her possession his happiness. Luck, love, life, hang for him on the retainment of the ring she has given to him. As long as the foreign

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doctor asks this ring as the only guerdon for his deed, he might refuse, however painful it was to deny it. But the entreaty of his friend, ready to pay the price of his happiness with his life, that he will reward his unlooked-for saviour with the desired jewel, he cannot resist. Had he not said that "his own life, his wife, all the world, hold not dearer than his friend's life"? Could Portia wish that her husband had done otherwise? In spite of this, she cruelly teases him with accusations. But the judge who knew so well how to plead the cause of mercy cannot be pitiless and unforgiving. This affected cruelty is only the playfulness of doubly blessed love; she knows not how to express the fulness of her joy at finding her husband's faith thus proved by his unfaithfulness. She must call humour to her assistance. The humour she showed once before when Bassanio, before the court, gave Antonio the assurance that seemed at the time to conflict with his duty as a husband. Could Portia, "on such a night," be angry in earnest with her lover, who is only apparently unfaithful?—on such a night, when all the enamoured couples meet at Belmont?—on such a night, in which Luna, the heavenly lamp of love, "sleeps so sweetly on that bank," in which Lorenzo talks of the "floor of heaven," and the music of the spheres, and "the young-eyed cherubim" so exquisitely, and of the sound of earthly music, too, disposing to forgiveness? When Portia enters this garden, her own home, she enjoys the proud feeling of having done a good action. She compares it to a little candle that throws its beams from her own hall. Thus attuned, the most love-worthy of all women can have only peace and forgiveness in her breast; therefore the last playful shadows of division vanish in sweet peace and renewed vows of love. Promises of love and faith are exchanged, forgiveness afresh and mercy are the sweet flowers of love. No poet has ever sung more gloriously the might and beauty of love, it is the very moonlight of the realm

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of night. Portia is certainly among the most gifted and charming female characters a heaven-endowed poet ever created.

THE WOMEN OF "RICHARD III."

Princess Anne—Queen Elizabeth

It will be difficult to defend the two women in *Richard III.*, Princess Anne and Queen Elizabeth, who have always been pronounced caricatures by members of their own sex. Here two similar scenes must be considered. In the one, Richard, alike hateful in mind and body, persuades Princess Anne, widow of the Lancastrian Prince of Wales, whom he murdered, beside the bier of her father-in-law, Henry the Sixth, whom he also murdered, to listen favourably to his proposals of marriage. In the other, he wins over Queen Elizabeth, widow of Edward the Fourth, whose lovely boys have fallen under his murderous hand, to consent to his union with her daughter, the last child left to her. And this too after his first wife, Anne, has recently died under circumstances which aroused suspicion that her death might be ascribed to Richard's murderous practices. Does he not himself declare that "he'll have her, but he will not keep her long." As soon as his ends are served he will get rid of her. These two scenes have shocked even the poet's most faithful admirers, and all objections raised cannot be set aside. Let us only consider! She was daughter to the mighty Earl of Warwick, called the king-maker, because more than once in the frightful civil wars between the Red Rose of Lancaster and the White Rose of York the question was decided by him; wife to the young and amiable Lancastrian prince, Edward of Wales, the future king, therefore in the most brilliant position. She was brought up in a house whose splendour eclipsed that of the royal court, and was destined, it seemed, herself to wear a crown. And now! Flung from her high estate, deprived of her father by his

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death on the battlefield, of her youthful husband by a cruel murder, at once an orphan and a widow, beggared instead of honoured by the triumph of the rival house, weeping she follows the coffin of her lately-murdered father-in-law, King Henry the Sixth. While giving utterance to her grief in passionate expressions, there comes upon her the very man who has placed his iron grip upon her life, by whom she has been orphaned and widowed, who has destroyed all the flowers that promised to bear her such ripe and glorious fruit, whose hands are gory with the blood of her father, husband, and father-in-law. And this Richard of Gloster, the wicked demon whom she has so much reason to hate, is not even gifted with outward charms, such as might dazzle and lead astray a weak or sensually-minded woman. God has set an outward mark on this evil prince, who thus describes himself:

> I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty,
> To strut before a wanton, ambling nymph;
> I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.
>
> *Richard III.*, act i. scene 1.

Anne's good and bad qualities, we might suppose, would render it impossible for her to lend a favourable ear to the wooing of this hateful man, so unpleasing in exterior. All her memories as daughter and wife must cleave an abyss between her and this unlovely wooer. And yet, after an angry outbreak of hatred and scorn, she parts from him with words which, though they still sound doubtful and equivocal, allow him to hope for a favourable issue to his suit. She takes his ring, albeit with the phrase, "to take is not to give." The monster sees himself nearing the prize, and breaks out triumphantly:

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Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?
I'll have her; but I will not keep her long.
What! I, that kill'd her husband and her father,
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of her hatred by;
Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
And I nothing to back my suit at all
But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!
Ha!
Hath she forgot already that brave prince,
Edward, her lord, whom I, some three months since,
Stabb'd in my angry mood at Tewkesbury?
A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,
Framed in the prodigality of nature,
Young, valiant, wise, and, no doubt, right royal,
The spacious world cannot again afford;
And will she yet debase her eyes on me,
That cropp'd the golden prime of this sweet prince,
And made her widow to a woful bed?
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?
On me, that halt and am unshapen thus?

Richard III., act i. scene 2.

Shakespeare himself, in this monologue, furnishes a criticism on the situation. He thus places it beyond question that the scene was not the result of carelessness. Outrageous as it is, it was written with perfect consciousness, with foresight and preparation. It is noticeable that he, who generally keeps so close to history, here falls markedly and consciously away. In the scene with Elizabeth he almost repeats himself. The poet, who, we know, is such an adept in knowledge of human nature, and not least of the female heart, shows us such an alarming example of feminine weakness and want of character that we hesitate to follow him. Certainly he uses all the gifts at his command to make this development appear natural and founded in the character of the female sex. With rough words, and with a manner learned, no doubt, in the wild school of civil war, Richard stops the procession in which Anne, as mourner,

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is following the corpse of King Henry the Sixth to its last resting-place. "Villains, set down the corpse, or, by St. Paul, I'll make a corpse of him that disobeys." In a tone of the sweetest flattery he turns to Anne, paying homage to her beauty, praying for her forgiveness. Undeterred by the disgust she evinces, he answers every abusive phrase with tender words or with outrageous lies. He lays the blame of all his crimes on her, he declares they were all caused by his passionate desire to possess her charms. Anne's horror at first knows no bounds; she spits at the dissembler. The change follows in consequence of a skilful appeal made to a certain side of the female character, by his prayer to her to slay him with her own hand. She betrays her weakness in the words, "Though I wish thy death, I will not be thy executioner." If we wish to grasp to a certain extent the psychological movement of Anne's mind, leading to a result so painfully surprising, we must remember two traits inherent in the nature of woman. On the one hand, they are apt to judge crimes more mildly when committed for their sakes; on the other, they feel exalted by the thought of reforming a wild, untamed, abandoned man by their gentle influence, and awakening him to softer feelings. Still we cannot feel entirely satisfied with this justification. We cannot believe that female weakness and want of character can go as far as Shakespeare would have us think. We have often heard in comedies of the fickleness of the female sex in love affairs, and have laughed heartily at such stories. But a fable does not become true through repetition, and this supposed great female fickleness is one of those fables. We know our mothers, wives, and sisters too well, to believe that in such a situation so sudden a change in woman is psychologically possible, and we refuse to accept in serious drama a motive we suffer in comedy. Even Shakespeare cannot be allowed to shock our sense of nature and truth, and we turn away in disgust from this scene, where breathes

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such contempt, so low and unjustifiable an estimate of the female sex.

The matter is rather different in the scene with Elizabeth, but hardly more favourable towards women. In the same way as Anne suffered cruelty through Richard as daughter and wife, so in Elizabeth the holiest and warmest of womanly feelings, maternal love, has been outraged to the last degree by the bloody and cruel usurper. Her lovely, hopeful boys, endowed with the fairest gifts of heart and mind, promising a brilliant future, and causing intense joy to their mother by their beauty and lovableness, have been murdered in the flower of their youth. Besides, the holiest sentiment of a mother's heart, her feminine ambition has also been mortally wounded. The widowed queen, though she had lost the throne, might hope to fill a splendid position as the king's mother. She was hurled down irrevocably from her high place, and forced to behold the crown on the head of him who had slain her dearest. The gulf separating her from this murderer was as deep as that which divided him from Anne. Before Richard's last crime had broken her heart, Elizabeth during her husband's lifetime had plenty of opportunities of learning how dangerous was the character of Richard of Gloster, his falsehood and hypocrisy. Before he murdered her sons he had destroyed her whole family, whom he always regarded with envious hatred. How could she allow her daughter, the last child his undying rage had left her, to marry this man, the murderer of her brothers—the man too whom she more than suspected of poisoning his first wife, poor befooled Anne? And yet this most monstrous thing happens; she lets herself be persuaded, and agrees to be the bearer of his proposals to her daughter, albeit after a hard struggle and with the full consciousness of the unnatural character of her steps. The passage is characteristic:

> *Q. Eliz.* Shall I be tempted of the devil thus?
> *K. Rich.* Ay, if the devil tempt thee to do good.

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Q. Eliz. Shall I forget myself to be myself?
K. Rich. Ay, if yourself's remembrance wrong yourself.
Q. Eliz. But thou didst kill my children.
K. Rich. But in your daughter's womb I bury them;
Where in that nest of spicery they shall breed
Selves of themselves, to your recomforture.
Q. Eliz. Shall I go win my daughter to thy will?
K. Rich. And be a happy mother by the deed.
Q. Eliz. I go. Write to me very shortly,
And you shall understand from me her mind.
K. Rich. Bear her my true love's kiss; and so, farewell.
[*Exit Q. Elizabeth.*
Relenting fool, and shallow, changing woman.
Richard III., act iv. scene 4.

One circumstance must be noted here which did not come into play in the case of Anne. Affairs in England were approaching a serious crisis. The bloody manner in which Richard ascended the throne, the violence with which he swayed his ill-gotten sceptre, was calculated to excite a strong reaction. The young Earl of Richmond was preparing an expedition against the tyrant. From the whole context it would appear that Elizabeth knew this. The plan must already have been ventilated that afterwards culminated in the marriage of Elizabeth's daughter, heiress of the House of York, and Richmond, son of Catherine, widow of Henry the Fifth, and half brother of Henry the Sixth, who claimed the throne as heir of the Lancastrian branch. By this marriage all disputes as to the right of the two Houses was avoided, and a peaceful and undisputed succession to the throne secured. The utmost prudence was necessary in dealing with the politic and crafty tyrant. If he discovered prematurely that there was a connection between Richmond and Elizabeth, if he came upon the traces of a marriage so fraught with danger to himself, this remorseless man might be capable of resolves and actions perilous both to the widowed queen and daughter. It may well be, therefore, that Elizabeth, to deceive the great deceiver, and to gain time for Richmond's arrival, pretended to agree to Richard's proposal. If this was her idea, she

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cannot be blamed. But it is not quite clear. We cannot help thinking that the queen, to ensure a throne for her daughter in the event of Richmond's failure, contemplated her marriage with the murderer of her brothers, of her whole family. Here we once more have the impression that a bitter misogynist guides the pen, and the thought again obtrudes itself that the poet wrote these scenes under the influence of unpleasant memories of suffering inflicted on him by some woman. We have already mentioned our theory that reasons may be discovered in Shakespeare's earlier plays for such a conclusion, and that the history of his domestic life caused him to wish to avenge himself upon the female sex. The demoniac passions of the women in *Henry VI.*, the colourless weakness of those in *Richard III.*, seem to have been used by him with a sort of pleasure as subjects of the bitterest satire.

"RICHARD II."

Duchess of Gloster—The Queen—Duchess of York

This historic drama, which deals with the rise of the House of Lancaster, was written not very long after *Richard III.*, and inaugurates the grand series of dramas which have unrolled before the English people, as in a gigantic panorama, one of the most terrible periods of their history. Surely no other nation can boast so precious a possession. The female characters in this play are not of great importance. First comes the Duchess of Gloster, widow of the king's uncle, the lately murdered Duke of Gloster. We find her in excited colloquy with her brother-in-law, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. In ardent words she conjures him to avenge the murder of her late husband, his brother, if only for the sake of his own safety, for if he takes patiently the atrocious murder of his brother he shows his enemies the way to his own life. But old Gaunt remains quiet and

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unmoved before the fiery zeal of the vindictive woman, and advises her, since the "anointed deputy of Heaven has caused his brother's death, to turn to Heaven, the widow's champion and defence." She knows that on that very day Lancaster's son, Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Hereford, afterwards King Henry IV., is to fight with Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, accused by him of high treason, and whom she calls the "butcher" of her husband. She wishes Henry all manner of success and retreats into widowed retirement, "with companion grief, to end her life," and in fact dies soon after. The queen, Richard's wife, is a gentle, lovable being, of no intellectual importance, devoted to her husband. The departure of this husband for Ireland throws her into a sad and troubled mood. She controlled her grief at the moment of parting, but when she had said farewell to so sweet a guest as Richard, she can no longer do so. The terrible news of the landing of the banished Bolingbroke causes her to lose all courage, as if everything were already lost.

> Who shall hinder me?
> I will despair, and be at enmity
> With cozening hope: he is a flatterer,
> A parasite, a keeper back of death,
> Who gently would dissolve the bands of life,
> Which false hope lingers in extremity.
>
> *Richard II.*, act ii. scene 2.

Touching is the scene of the last parting between the queen and Richard, before he is led to prison, whence death only frees him. Her true love, her profound tenderness, are shown in every word. She utters not a syllable of lamentation over her own fall; all her thoughts are concentrated on him only—on him whom she would have followed into the deepest dungeon, had Bolingbroke, who has now ascended the throne as Henry IV., permitted it.

The third female character in this play is the old Duchess of York. If the queen appeals to our sympathies in her wifely character, it is a mother who now moves us by her

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cares and anguish. Her son Aumerle has entered into a conspiracy against the life of the newly crowned king, Henry IV. His father, the old Duke of York, has discovered this, and insists on going straight to the king to denounce his own son of high treason. With earnest words, with energy, the Duchess conjures him to conceal his fault, not to "rob her of a happy mother's name," and when, deaf to her entreaties, he rides off, she urges her son to ride faster and arrive before his father. She herself, despite her age, sets off, "and never will she rise up from the ground till Bolingbroke have pardoned." York, a second Brutus, counsels the king to inflict exemplary punishment on the guilty youth, his own son, but the powerful eloquence of the Duchess, who trembles for her child's life, touches the heart of Bolingbroke, and he pardons young Aumerle, while the other conspirators receive condign punishment. "A god on earth thou art!" cries the Duchess, who sees her dearest saved by her courage and resolution.

THE WOMEN IN "KING JOHN"

Constance—Queen Eleanor—Blanche of Castile

Independent, each complete in itself, they stand beside the mighty series of eight royal dramas which portray the course of English history from the accession of the House of Lancaster, through the terrible wars of the White and Red Roses, to the accession of the Tudor, Henry VIII., a couple of dramas that bring before our eyes two important movements in the history and development of England. *King John* shows how the realm, which had gained almost infinite power through a line of wise, prudent, and powerful monarchs, had fallen under a weak sovereign, from this majestic height. They tell how this once proud England submitted herself to Papal authority; how the politicians of Rome, with that diplomatic skill which distinguished

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them in all ages, cleverly manipulated the difficulties of the king and the internal confusion of England, to reduce the monarch to submission. On the other hand, the great barons of the realm exacted from this same king, in Magna Charta, the unalterable foundations of a monarchy constitutionally controlled by Parliament. *Henry VIII.* brings before us a powerful, energetic monarch, who, to gratify his passions, is made the unwilling instrument through which is accomplished one of the greatest and most important movements for the future of England, the Reformation, and the loosening of the land from the rule of the Papal See. *King John* has a purely political action, hence the women here are somewhat in the background. In *Henry VIII.* the monarch's passion for Anne Bullen is the leading motive. Consequently the ambition of Anne Bullen, who cleverly exploits Henry's love, and the touching patience and noble dignity with which Queen Catherine meets her fate, play a prominent part. Still the women in *King John* have also an importance that enables us to admire the art of character-painting, and the power with which the exceedingly scant historical materials have been used. When we examine the most prominent female character in *King John*, Constance, the mother of Prince Arthur, whose place has been usurped by his uncle, the king, we are struck with her resemblance to Volumnia, the mother of Coriolanus. In both a powerful pride, a destructive ambition, a glowing maternal love, an unbending strength of will, are distinguishing characteristics. But the great difference between these two characters lies in the circumstance, that while Volumnia, who, with her great and hard characteristics, exhibits only a part of the qualities of her people, and that its patrician portion, has grown by natural development, Constance is a more self-contained being, for she draws her strong passions, her peculiarities as well as her weaknesses, from her personal fate. This history Shakespeare has set forth with all its attendant circumstances in a true and lively manner, in accordance

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with the materials at his command. These materials, certainly, gave him only scattered and somewhat vague hints and indications, but he manipulated them so skilfully in the portrayal of her personality and character, that there is no doubt the picture given agrees fully with the historic background from which it arises, and also comes very near historic truth when compared with the results of later researches into the history and character of Constance. Shakespeare shows us Constance in a few scenes only, but these suffice to impress us with the conviction that we have here before us the result of a life singularly diversified and full of meaning—an uncontrollable will, a wild passionate temper, that fights unweariedly, undeterred by defeat, against inimical and victorious forces. Constance was the only daughter, and therefore heiress, of Duke Conan IV. of Brittany. She was born unfortunate, so to speak. Her great-grandmother, Mathilde, wife of Conan III., was as ambitious as she was beautiful and light of conduct. Her husband did not separate from her, but disinherited her son Hoel, of whose legitimacy he had reason to doubt, and made his daughter Bertha and her consort, Allan of Richmond, heirs to the Duchy of Brittany, and as such they were recognised. But Hoel raised an army to defend his right of succession to his father's dukedom.

A long and bloody civil war resulted. The Duchess Bertha enjoyed a reputation that was not much better than that of her mother Mathilde. She was succeeded by her son Conan IV., a weak undecided prince. After fighting unsuccessfully for some years against the increasing power of his uncle Hoel, and the unruly nobles of his dukedom, he appealed for help to Henry II., one of the wisest but most ambitious monarchs that ever sat upon the English throne. Hence arose important consequences for his crown and successors. The unfortunate Duchy of Brittany, from the moment the English mixed themselves up in its affairs, called in as they were by its own Duke, was given up to all forms of violence

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and crime. The Duchy vainly strove to defend itself against a superior power which shrank from no form of treachery. During the ten years this struggle lasted, the larger part of the realm was laid waste. The cunning and tyrannical King of England sold his protection to Duke Conan, assuring to him his sovereignty as the price of subjection of his best provinces. Hence the Duke was little more than a vassal of the English crown. In 1164 Constance was born in the midst of troubles and bloody battles. King Henry II. took possession of her in her childhood, and caused her to marry his third son, Geoffrey Plantagenet, in order to secure to his House for ever the possession of the Duchy of Brittany. After the death of Conan, Henry, without more ado, claimed the Duchy in the name of his daughter-in-law. As the people hesitated to submit, he took possession with a large army, which desolated the country and committed cruel and bloody acts of violence against the whole population. He caused Geoffrey and Constance to be solemnly crowned at Rheims as Duke and Duchess. The former was eight years old, the latter five. Naturally Henry ruled the country for the children and oppressed it in every way. Constance for full fourteen years was treated more as a hostage than a princess. Only in 1182, when nineteen years old, was her marriage with Geoffrey solemnly consummated, and Constance recognised Duchess of Brittany in her own right. Henry II., as is well known, had to struggle all his life against the undutiful and rebellious actions of his sons. Of these, Geoffrey was the most wilful and the most dangerous. He was filled with ungovernable pride, but gifted with great military talent. He was, besides, the only one of Henry's sons who had inherited his intellect, his eloquence, and his extraordinary cunning. Scarcely was his marriage with Constance completed, no sooner had he come into possession of the Duchy of Brittany, than he proceeded, in open opposition to his father, to protect the unhappy country, and the honour and interests of his wife, its rightful sovereign, against the

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English robbers. After some years, the sovereign pair visited Paris to contract an offensive and defensive alliance with the King of France, but here, where they were received with great splendour, Geoffrey lost his life by an accident at a tournament given in his honour. The barons of his Duchy, where the Salic law forbidding the accession of women to the throne does not seem to have been in force, recognised Constance as their Duchess. A few months after her husband's death, a son was born to her, to the delight of all the country. By general request the boy was named Arthur, after the famous hero of the Round Table, of whom popular legend prophesied that he would return and restore power and freedom to his country. These hopes were now centred on the infant Arthur. But superstitions, aspirations, and dreams soon vanished before hard reality. Henry demanded the possession of his grandson, whose natural guardian he declared himself to be, and on the angry refusal of Constance, he broke into the unfortunate Duchy with a powerful army and took possession, after laying waste the capital, Rennes, making prisoners by treachery Constance and her son. He forced Constance to marry one of his favourite vassals, Randal, Earl of Chester, who was to hold the Duchy of Brittany as a fief of the English crown. The husband thus imposed upon Constance was not likely, by his personality, to render her contented with such an involuntary union. His outward appearance was as plain and insignificant as his temper was ungovernably proud and boundlessly ambitious. Constance, whose strong will, we know not how, was forced to bend to this unwelcome marriage in every way so unworthy, seized the first occasion which presented itself to be freed. This opportunity occurred at Henry's death in 1189. On the news of this event the nobles of Brittany rose, killing and banishing the representatives of the English power, and, with the hearty assent of Constance, driving out her hated spouse. Henry's successor in England, the famous Richard Cœur-de-Lion (his second son, Henry's

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eldest son had died before his father), before setting out on his important crusading expedition, recognised Arthur as the rightful heir of Brittany. Her suzerain being absent, Constance was thus able to rule the country for seven years as regent for her son, and it must be said that she used this time to the advantage of her country. She strove, as far as in her lay, to heal the wounds caused by the bloody civil wars and the frightful rapine of the foreign armies during more than two decades. In 1198 the law of the land recognised Arthur, then nine years old, as Duke, and Constance insisted, in spite of his tender age, in associating him in all the acts of government. She was forced to repent sorely of this proceeding, inspired more by motherly tenderness than political wisdom.

After a long absence, rich in deeds of valour and bitter suffering, Richard the Lion-hearted returned to his kingdom. Aroused by the complaints of the Earl of Chester, he angrily expressed his displeasure that Constance had associated her son in the government without the consent of her suzerain. Constance's excuses seem to have pacified him, and a friendly meeting was arranged to take place between them at Pontorson, near the Norman frontier. The romantic traditions of the time are full of striking and exciting tales of Richard's life and deeds in the East, of his chivalrous conduct to his enemies, especially to Saladin, the great Sultan of Egypt, and of his touching relations with his faithful minstrel Blondel. But what now follows does not accord with these legends, but exhibits him in the light of a man without truth or faith, who shrank from no form of deceit or violence when he had a political end to gain. Constance, confiding in the friendly invitation of her royal brother-in-law, went to the place fixed for the meeting at Pontorson with only a small escort. Just outside the town, as she was preparing to enter the gate, she was fallen on by her vindictive husband, the Earl of Chester, from a cunningly prepared ambush. He drove off her escort and carried her to a

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stronghold where she was kept a close prisoner for eighteen months, entirely separated from her servants and dependents. As the condition of the Duchy under Richard, after this base breach of trust, became even more troublesome than before, Chester was forced to sue for the liberty of his wife, the rightful princess. But the king answered so evasively that it was evident his object was to gain time. His offer to free her upon the fulfilment of certain conditions was only an excuse to obtain a long delay. The delegates fulfilled the conditions, gave the hostages required by the king, and asked on their side, for the fulfilment of the pledge given, the immediate release of their Duchess. But Richard now threw off the mask. He refused to restore the hostages or to set Constance free, as he had pledged himself, and overran Brittany with an army, which caused the unhappy country suffering and desolation, compared to which all it had endured in former wars was but a trifle. All the fruitful results of Constance's peaceful rule were swept away; all she had so wisely and kindly created was with a rough and cruel hand mercilessly dashed to ruin. Fire and sword desolated country, town, village, and castle. Through the burning of the forests the wretched inhabitants were deprived of their last refuges. The Duchess, when she set out for the meeting at Pontorson which proved so fatal for herself and country, had confided her son Arthur to the care of a faithful retainer, the marshal of the palace, William Desroches. He fled at the outbreak of the terrible storm to the fortress of Brest, which he defended for some time against the power of England. But despite the courage, the self-sacrifice of the nobles and people, superior force was on the English side. They were obliged to submit to Richard's conditions. Constance was released from prison, but not from her marriage, which was declared unbroken. When Richard died in 1198, Constance hastened to rid herself of her detested spouse, not waiting for a Papal dispensation, as was the custom, but

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with characteristic impetuosity marrying at once the brave and honourable Count Guy of Thouars, who for a while did all in his power to protect his wife and stepson against English violence. Arthur, now fourteen years old, was the rightful heir to the English throne. Constance appointed Philip Augustus, king of France, his guardian. He knighted the young Prince, and swore a solemn oath to support his rights against his uncle John, who had usurped the crown. His wavering and double-faced conduct, however, proved that he had more his own interests and his own designs of aggrandisement at heart than the unselfish support of the disinherited youth. For the moment, he decided to champion Arthur. The drama opens with his imperious order to the King of England to vacate his usurped throne in favour of his nephew Arthur, Duke of Brittany. The action continues until the death of King John. Before we examine Constance, as Shakespeare has shown her to us, let us consider the historical personality here set before us as accurately as is possible with the materials to hand. We find, first of all, that she can never be accused of wilful or unjust conduct, of vice or crime, but rather that during the short time she was permitted to rule her country independently, and in her own way, she proved herself a wise and benevolent princess, who restored prosperity to her dominions, as far as this was possible, in so brief a period, and was, on this account, rewarded by the love and confidence of all her subjects, high and low. The light conduct of which so many of her female ancestors were guilty, did not descend to her; we hear nothing of a stain upon her reputation or her conjugal honour. Nevertheless, her character has shadows as well as lights. She was wanting in self-control, that virtue without which all others, especially in woman, lose much worth. Her speech was often unmeasured and rough to an unfeminine degree; her impulses were thoughtless and precipitate. In spite of her strength of will, she thus became, uncon-

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sciously, the tool of her enemies, whose superior cunning she could not cope with, owing to this very want of self-control. We shall see how Shakespeare has used the materials left him by history in drawing the character of Constance. The principal personages in *King John* are the king himself, the bastard son of Richard the Lion-hearted, Faulconbridge, a character evidently a favourite with the poet, and Constance herself. The latter, who appears in history only in faint, vague, hardly recognisable outlines, stands out in Shakespeare's lively portrayal with sharply-defined distinctness, and appeals to us like a being of flesh and blood. But all the sympathy that Constance wins is founded on one single point, her devotion to her son. As in some other of Shakespeare's female characters whose supreme object in life is passionate love for some man, so in Constance this maternal love is the only reason for her life. Nay, it is to her life itself. All that occurs around her has a meaning for her only in so far as it exerts a favourable or unfavourable influence upon her son's fortunes. All the people she meets play a part for her only in so far as they have power and intention to aid her son in obtaining his rights to the crown of England. In her passionate conviction of her boy's undoubted claim, she holds it a sacred duty for all who have the power to fight for this, utterly regardless whether it be to their own advantage or the reverse. Every one, according to her, is pledged to sacrifice all for the sake of the cruel violence of which her amiable boy is a victim.

In all the scenes in which she appears, we hear her speak of nothing but her son's rights; she fears nothing, trembles for nothing but her son's life.

But, in spite of the overpowering, or rather entire prominence of maternal love which shows itself in Constance's demeanour and words, it reveals itself in a fashion through which we recognise clearly the other features of her character. One quality is reflected plainly in all her expressions,

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and that is an energy transcending that common to her sex. But this energy is unequally developed; it manifests itself in an inordinate imagination, in fixity of will, in an untameable glow of passion. She is lacking in the moral power which leads to self-control. Feeling and imagination are so highly developed in this woman, that her other qualities fall into the background. She is conscious of womanly weakness, and this consciousness is the source of the distrust to which she often yields; of the despair which often consumes her. In all her outbreaks of passion, in all the rages into which she falls, she always remains within the bounds of feminine nature. In her exclusive maternal love, she deems it self-evident that others should be sacrificed to her son. Hence she loses her intellectual impartiality, whenever she meets any obstacle or delay. She has neither patience to await the development of affairs, which do not, as she imagines, revolve exclusively around the fortunes of her son as their natural centre, nor steadfastness enough to endure an unfavourable turn of events. Hence arise the many apparent contradictions in her expressions. She beholds everything solely from the point of view of her son's interest. At one moment she counsels, with great decision, measures which the next moment she as decidedly advises against. For instance, she urges the King of France to keep the peace and await the answer to Chatillon's embassy, for she expects a favourable reply; later on, when she conceives herself to have suffered injustice, and all her passions have been heated to the highest pitch, she calls out in ungovernable rage, "War! war! no peace; peace is to me a war." Some have maintained that Constance is ambitious, not only for her son, but also for herself, that she desires dominion for its own sake; but this view seems to me unjust. She proclaims with the energy of a loving mother and a proud woman the rights of her son, but when she has lost him, her pain at his loss is her sole thought, beside which no other finds place, not even desire of vengeance. Madness, too, which

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involuntarily brings the innermost thoughts of men to their lips, forces only lamentations from her. She says to the Cardinal:

> Father Cardinal, I have heard you say
> That we shall see and know our friends in heaven;
> If that be true, I shall see my boy again;
> For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
> To him that did but yesterday suspire,
> There was not such a gracious creature born.
> But now will canker sorrow eat my bud
> And chase the native beauty from his cheek
> And he will look as hollow as a ghost,
> As dim and meagre as an ague's fit,
> And so he'll die; and, rising so again,
> When I shall meet him in the court of heaven
> I shall not know him; therefore never, never
> Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.
>
> *King John*, act iii. scene 4.

The unbounded liveliness of her imagination turns her grief to madness, and yet she is not mad. She says:

> I am not mad: this hair I tear is mine;
> My name is Constance; I was Geffrey's wife;
> Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost:
> I am not mad; I would to heaven I were!
> For then, 'tis like I should forget myself:
> O, if I could, what grief should I forget!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> If I were mad, I should forget my son,
> Or madly think a babe of clouts were he:
> I am not mad; too well, too well I feel
> The different plague of each calamity.
>
> *King John*, act iii. scene 4.

Her eloquence rises to the highest flights of metaphor. Listen, for example, to these passages:

> I will instruct my sorrows to be proud;
> For grief is proud, and makes his owner stoop.
> To me and to the state of my great grief
> Let kings assemble; for my grief's so great
> That no supporter but the huge firm earth
> Can hold it up: here I and sorrows sit;
> Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.
>
> *King John*, act iii. scene 1.

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And

> O, that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth!
> Then with a passion would I shake the world;
> And rouse from sleep that fell anatomy
> Which cannot hear a lady's feeble voice,
> Which scorns a modern invocation.—*King John*, act iii. scene 4.

Death will be welcome, but she paints him in hideous colours:

> Death, death: O amiable lovely death!
> Thou odoriferous stench! sound rottenness!
> Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,
> Thou hate and terror to prosperity,
> And I will kiss thy detestable bones
> And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows
> And ring these fingers with thy household worms
> And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust,
> And be a carrion monster like thyself:
> Come, grin on me, and I will think thou smilest
> And buss thee as thy wife. Misery's love,
> O, come to me!—*King John*, act iii. scene 4.

Resuming this whole description, we find that pride and maternal love are the foundations of Constance's personality, but owing to her unusual intellectual capacity, the strength of her passions, and the powerful flights of her imagination, these qualities, which she has in common with others, are carried to a high, nay, a terrible pitch.

The other female characters of this play, old Queen Eleanor and the young Princess Blanche of Castile, are traced only in outline, but they are historically faithful. Eleanor is seventy; her passionate character, which led her in youth into many imprudences, is but slightly chastened by age. She has a strong understanding, but little education, and an uncontrolled appetite for power. The old chronicles say that she had a personal hatred for Constance, and that she transmitted this hatred to Arthur. Shakespeare has preserved these characteristics and portrayed them in masterly mode. Blanche of Castile was the daughter of

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King Alphonse of Castile and Eleanor's grandchild. Her marriage with the Dauphin Louis, afterwards Louis VIII., took place as suddenly as described in the play. She was marvellously beautiful; her reputation was unstained. She was proud of her lineage and rank, deeply religious, and filled with boundless desire to rule. Later on she played a great part in European history as Regent of France, and is one of the most celebrated women of her own or of any time.

"THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR"

Mistress Ford—Anne Page

This comedy, which furnished the material for Nicolai's popular opera, and which recently, owing to Verdi's work, has become the subject of universal attention, was the offspring of a wish expressed by Queen Elizabeth to "see the fat knight in love." The piece is full of unbridled fun, but I have always considered that, despite its coarse comic tone, it possesses a healthy moral kernel, from which modern playwrights might well take example. The wife of Master Ford, a Windsor burgher, is a worthy woman, devoted to her husband, but pleasure-loving and disposed to regard life from the cheerful side. This is greatly hindered by her husband's outrageous jealousy, on which account he torments her with whims and undeserved distrust. An opportunity occurs to avenge herself, and at the same time to punish the impudent advances and licentious proposals of the old knight Falstaff, who, through unfavourable circumstances, has come down in the world, and has formed a rascally plan to raise himself again by means of a double intrigue with two well-to-do women. The "Merry Wives" set to work with the double object of disgusting Ford with his jealous whims and of punishing the old libertine for his impudence in making improper proposals. Both schemes

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succeed. Falstaff is twice invited to a rendezvous in the house of Mistress Ford, and twice falls into the trap. Twice is Master Ford warned of the rendezvous, and on both occasions the cunning women manage to get the fat knight away, once in the buck-basket, once disguised as an old woman. Ford, when he rages through the house, finding no one, becomes the subject of endless laughter and fun. Nevertheless—and herein I find a proof of the truly moral intention of the poet—the licentious admirer is made much more ridiculous than the husband, and is placed in much more unpleasant positions. Once he is thrown into a pond; once he is soundly beaten. The jealous husband, even when he has reason to be jealous, is made the object of scorn and laughter in the cynical French comedies of the present day. Side by side with this principal action runs, in Shakespearian fashion, a subordinate theme, which occurs in the house of the husband of the second "Merry Wife." Father and mother have each chosen a different consort for their daughter; she, however, who cannot endure either, cunningly manages to take occasion of the great final trick played on Falstaff to marry her favoured lover, young Fenton. It does not enter into my plan to speak of all the droll and comic incidents of this play, which contains many highly drastic and realistic characters. They would lose their force by dry recital. My task is confined to characterising the various female types—an easy one in this instance, as none of them present any psychological riddles for solution. The "Merry Wives" are healthy natures, full of cheerfulness and joyous life, who certainly go tolerably far in their practical jokes, but never act in a manner contrary to morality or true honour. Anne Page is a lovable innocent girl, gifted by nature with a rich dower of ability and skill to accompany her on life's path, whereby she finds herself in a position to defend and assure her happiness, as she conceives it, against the unreasonable plans of her parents.

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"AS YOU LIKE IT"

Rosalind—Celia

A bright-tinted fantastic life unfolds itself before our eyes in the charming comedy which Shakespeare, we cannot imagine why, has entitled *As You Like It.* According to his favourite wont, he here causes two actions, related to each other in their nature, to run side by side, and in the end to unite into one. In two families quarrels have broken out between brothers. The younger brother of the rightful Duke has fled into the neighbouring forest of Ardennes, and there leads, with those nobles who have remained true, "a careless life as in the golden age." The daughter of the banished Duke, Rosalind, united in tender friendship to Celia, the daughter of the usurper, has yielded to the earnest request of her cousin and has remained at court. On the other hand, there reigns dissension between the three sons of old Sir Rolan de Bois, recently demised, only here the elder brother wrongs the younger. The father has left to Orlando, the youngest of his three sons, only a small patrimony, but has charged Oliver, the eldest, to provide for his brothers' education. Oliver fulfils his father's trust only as regards Jaques, the second brother, and neglects Orlando in a manner which evokes his bitter complaints:

> For my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept: for call you that keeping for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better; for, besides that they are fair with their feeding, they are taught their manage, and to that end riders dearly hired: but I, his brother, gain nothing under him but growth. . . . . I know no wise remedy how to avoid it.—*As You Like It*, act i. scene 1.

Orlando rebels against this treatment, and, in an angry colloquy with his brother, demands the sum due to him under his father's will, in order to seek fortune on his own

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account. Oliver with contemptuous words accedes, but he intends to be rid of him in some other way without paying his portion. A favourable occasion offers. The wrestler of the reigning Duke comes to tell him that Orlando has challenged him to a wrestling-match before the ruler, but as this will certainly prove fatal to the young man, he calls upon Oliver to dissuade him from the dangerous undertaking. The wicked brother tells the wrestler that "he had as lief he should break Orlando's neck as his finger, that there is not one so young and so villainous this day living," and endeavours in every way to provoke the wrestler's anger against Orlando.

Rosalind and Celia desire to look on at this wrestling-match, and strive with moving entreaties to turn the youth from his purpose. Rosalind in this scene betrays that she has given her heart to this handsome, charming young man. But all in vain. He dares the combat, and is victorious. The Duke, who was about to reward him, turns away coldly on hearing that he is the son of Sir Roland de Bois, a faithful adherent of his deposed brother. The gentle angelic Celia is deeply wounded by her father's unjust proceeding, and feels constrained to speak a friendly word to the young man who has been so ill-treated. Rosalind, carried away by her newly awakened inclination, gives him a gold chain, and can scarcely consent to part from him. Celia's friendship is put to a severe test, whence she issues victorious. The Duke, her father, seized with sudden anger against Rosalind, banishes her from court, but Celia will not part from her friend, and they resolve to repair to Rosalind's father in the forest of Arden. With gay coquettish wit, Rosalind declares her intention of assuming man's attire:

> Were it not better,
> Because that I am more than common tall,
> That I did suit me all points like a man?
> A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,
> A boar-spear in my hand; and—in my heart

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Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will—
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
As many other mannish cowards have
That do outface it with their semblances.

As You Like It, act i. scene 3.

The two girls, after some hardships, find themselves in the forest, and take up their abode in a farm, where they live as brother and sister. They renew acquaintance with Orlando, who has also fled from his brother's persecution into the forest. The part of Adam, his faithful servant, who accompanies him, and which was evidently delineated with affection by the poet, used to be played by Shakespeare himself. The fascinating idyllic picture of forest life is one of the most enchanting ever created by a poet. Orlando, tormented by love, cuts the name of Rosalind on the bark of every tree, and hangs love-poems on every branch. I incline to believe that he recognised her at their first meeting, which makes their charming game of hide-and-seek only the more delightful. He can only express his devotion through the mock love-making she exacts in her boy character, until, become a girl again, she gives herself to him entirely, with her father's consent. The wicked Oliver, too, saved by Orlando from a cruel death, is thereby so touched and softened that he is converted, and as a reformed man wins the heart of the lovely Celia. The usurper is also converted by a holy friar, and restores the dominion to his deposed brother. We cannot follow the skilful and artistic action in all its details. It is only permitted to us to place the fair womanly figure of Rosalind in a right light. Rosalind is a character akin to Beatrice, in *Much Ado About Nothing*. She is gentler than Beatrice, but also less strong and deep. She is as witty and lively, but in another way. Beatrice's wit flashes like lightning, blinding, but often disquieting. Rosalind's distils itself like a refreshing spring. She chatters as a bird sings; all her life, joy, and love, all the sweet and happy movements of her heart overflow into her talk. She is as gentle as she

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is lively; over her boldest playfulness there breathes a sweet tenderness. Even her male attire, so slippery and dangerous a test to feminine modesty, does not harm her. How passionate and deep appears her love for Orlando, whether she hides it saucily, allows it to break forth impatiently, or half-unconsciously betrays it by fainting away at sight of the bloody handkerchief. How well she understands how to make herself agreeable to Orlando, in her conversations with him as a boy, without ever failing in female modesty. This Rosalind, in her wondrous mixture of playfulness, naïveté, and tenderness, is like a fine musical chord, and we abandon ourselves joyfully to the fascinating impression this absolutely harmonious female character arouses.

"TWELFTH NIGHT"

Viola—Olivia

Attractive womanliness, profound feeling and prudence, modesty and boldness, all these qualities unite in the lovely being Shakespeare calls Viola, and who, in that most perfect comedy, *Twelfth Night*, is one of his most charming female characters. We are in the capital of Illyria. The first scene presents us to the ruler, who is wasting away with a romantic passion for Countess Olivia. She returns cold answers to all his messages, for she is sunk in grief for the loss of a beloved brother, and has resolved to bewail him seven years in cloistered retirement. His passion, in lieu of being quieted by this resistance, is only the more enkindled, for he paints to himself, with glowing fancy, how one who can consecrate such true love to a brother will love him who wins her heart:

> How will she love, when the rich golden shaft
> Hath kill'd the flock of all affections else
> That live in her; when liver, brain, and heart,
> These sovereign thrones, are all supplied, and fill'd
> Her sweet perfections with one self king!
>
> *Twelfth Night*, act i. scene 1.

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After this short opening scene, in which the poet has shown us the characters of the romantic sentimental Duke and the seemingly cold Olivia, he brings before us the womanly being who shall make both change their *rôles*. Viola and her twin brother have suffered shipwreck on the coast of Illyria. She has but slight hopes that her brother has escaped a watery death, although she has been assured by the captain, who was saved together with her and a small number of the seamen, that he was last seen bound to a mast and floating on the waves. Information given to her by the captain causes her to conceive the idea of entering the service of Duke Orsino as a page, and when the sailor has procured her the necessary disguise, she carries out her design. Her charming appearance, even in male clothes, her amiable, prudent, and yet attractive demeanour, work with magic power upon the Duke. She rapidly wins his affectionate favour and full confidence, and is loaded by him with gifts and favours. The commission intrusted to her, to make yet another trial to win over Olivia to his suit, is a painful one. "Yet a barful strife, whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife." She has been seized with a passion for him, mingled with pity, gratitude, and tenderness. Nevertheless, she pleads his cause with glowing eloquence and skill. The rich fancy, the rare poetic gifts of this charming girl, which are but increased by her hidden romantic love for Orsino, are revealed in her description of how she would win Olivia's heart, were she inflamed by love for her:

> Make me a willow cabin at your gate,
> And call upon my soul within the house;
> Write loyal cantons of contemned love
> And sing them loud even in the dead of night;
> Halloo your name to the reverberate hills
> And make the babbling gossip of the air
> Cry out 'Olivia!' O, you should not rest
> Between the elements of air and earth,
> But you should pity me.—*Twelth Night*, act i. scene 5.

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The result is not what she anticipated. With a certain irony, fate punishes Olivia for dismissing all her suitors with a coldness unnatural in her sex, by inspiring her with love for a being who can never respond to her passion, and who makes her suffer all the unsatisfied longings she has caused to others. At their first meeting she feels that this youth is destined to disturb the cold peace of her heart:

> Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
> With an invisible and subtle stealth
> To creep in at mine eyes.—*Twelfth Night*, act i. scene 5.

She sends her steward to Viola with a ring, under pretext that it had been left as a gift from Viola's master, and that she would not keep it, as she was determined not to listen to his proposals. Viola, who had left no ring, understands the important and delicate nature of the situation, but her character helps her to overcome its doubtful side without causing her womanly modesty to suffer. I give her monologue, as it clearly paints her character, and especially as it shows us how differently she conducts herself from Rosalind when placed in a similar position in *As You Like It*. Viola does not feel saucily at ease in her man's clothes, like Rosalind. Her mind is not quite comfortable in this disguise. Though playing her part well, she never forgets, and never lets the spectator forget, that she is playing a part. After the steward has forced the ring upon her, and has left her alone, she says:

> I left no ring with her: what means this lady?
> Fortune forbid my outside have not charm'd her!
> She made good view of me; indeed, so much,
> That sure methought her eyes had lost her tongue,
> For she did speak in starts distractedly.
> She loves me, sure; the cunning of her passion
> Invites me in this churlish messenger.
> None of my lord's ring! why, he sent her none.
> I am the man: if it be so, as 'tis,
> Poor lady, she were better love a dream.

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Disguise, I see, thou art a wickedness,
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
How easy is it for the proper-false
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!
Alas! our frailty is the cause, not we!
For such as we are made of, such we be.
How will this fadge? My master loves her dearly;
And I, poor monster, fond as much on him;
And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me.
What will become of this? As I am man,
My state is desperate for my master's love;
As I am woman,—now alas the day!—
What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!
O time! thou must untangle this, not I;
It is too hard a knot for me to untie!

Twelfth Night, act ii. scene 2.

The feminine cowardice, which does not allow her even to feign a boldness appropriate to her dress, her shudder at the thought of drawing a sword, makes an uncommonly droll effect. Shakespeare plainly gives her the first place among the serious figures of this comedy, which is a masterpiece even in its most grotesque scenes. All the others must change their parts. The Duke is obliged to turn to Viola, the unmasked Cesario; Olivia, who through love's might is compelled to quit her assumed *rôle* of unnatural coldness, mistakes Sebastian for Cesario. Viola alone remains true to herself. She resembles a flower that has drawn the sunshine so deeply into its heart, that its beauty and perfume are everlasting.

"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"

Beatrice—Hero

Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* is the most perfect of those Shakespearian characters in which a spirit of fun that borders on rashness is delightfully united with a heart of golden purity.

Beatrice and her masculine counterpart, Benedick, are two healthy natures, who quarrel perpetually only because they

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feel irresistibly drawn to each other. The conspiracy, got up by their friends, to make these two fall in love, finds the work already accomplished, and can only hasten the development; for as soon as these persons approach each other and measure their strength, we recognise their natural affinities. The truth of the proverb, "Who loves, teases," is here proved with psychological skill. Before and during their first meeting, they betray by little touches that they feel a strong interest in each other. When a messenger announces to the Governor of Messina the victory of the Prince of Arragon, Beatrice immediately asks after Benedick, although she does so in a bitter, scornful, almost unfeminine tone which she always employs, until she recognises the love which has slumbered in her heart, and abandons the perpetual warfare against her real self. When Benedick returns with the victorious army, she attacks him straightway, though he has not paid her the slightest attention. She evidently cannot endure to be unnoticed by him; she irritates him by biting epigrams. Thus aroused, he answers in similar tones, and a lively word-war is soon waging between them, in which she overcomes him. Benedick shows himself in another light in the next scene, when young Claudio, a nobleman who has won laurels in the late campaign, declares himself enchanted by the charms of Hero, the daughter of Leonato, who, by contrast with Beatrice, is shy, silent, and maidenly. Benedick lets us see that he has a high idea of Beatrice's attractions, for he says, "There's her cousin, an she were not possessed by a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May exceeds the last of December." I do not therefore quite agree with Wilbrandt, who says, "Two people like Beatrice and Benedick, of different sexes, must irresistibly attract each other. They must begin by hating, because each is the natural opponent of the other, and end by loving, because each is the complement of the other." I would say rather, "These two splendid creatures understand very well that each is formed and intended to be the comple-

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ment of the other, but they defend themselves with all the power of their sharp intellect and their proud stiff-necked temperament against a love which seems to them a humiliation, a servitude. They crush with all their might the feeling already nascent, and hide it under the mask of hatred, seeking to master it by a war of wits. Beatrice must atone for her superiority in their wordy war by experiencing sharp pain later on, when her real feeling for Benedick becomes revealed to her, and breaks through the bounds she has carefully erected. She increases the sharpness and bitterness of her attacks only to subdue her real sentiments, and thus often oversteps womanly limits, for which she is afterwards punished by being all the more sharply attacked by love. She therefore falls straight into the trap when she hears that Benedick is deeply in love with her. The words she speaks after listening to the conversation of Leonato and Ursula, which is to confirm her belief in this, shows how under her hard bold outside beats a warm tender heart, that harbours something not at all like hatred for Benedick:

> What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
> Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?
> Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!
> No glory lives behind the back of such.
> And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,
> Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand:
> If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
> To bind our loves up in a holy band;
> For others say thou dost deserve, and I
> Believe it better than reportingly.
>
> *Much Ado About Nothing*, act iii. scene i.

He, too, immediately feels the effect of the means employed. Each requires only the conviction of the other's love to bring them to a consciousness of their own unrecognised feelings. Because neither trusted the other, they strove to hide their sentiments behind apparent dislike, and to master love through a war of wits. Something of flattered vanity is, nevertheless, a factor in both cases. In Beatrice

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the effect is deeper, the struggle more acute. Scornful "Lady Disdain" is suddenly disarmed, defenceless, her whole nature changed. She sighs and languishes, she has lost her saucy wit, she says she is sick. The catastrophe of the play's serious action leads to her release. The lovely gentle Hero, in her timid reserve, her modest quiet maidenliness, the exact opposite of bold saucy Beatrice, who often goes farther in her speeches than is seemly for a girl, is made the victim of a base intrigue. The young Florentine, Count Claudio, has lost his heart at first sight, and, through the Prince of Arragon, asks her hand of her father, who willingly accords it. But the Prince's brother, a false and malignant man, who, since their quarrel and his consequent defeat, has only feigned reconciliation, breeds mischief. One of his dependents, who is carrying on a flirtation with Hero's chambermaid, contrives, at his lord's order, to cause the Prince and Claudio to believe, by means of a scandalous trick combined with this girl, that it is Hero who has granted him a nocturnal interview. Everything is ready for the wedding: the monk puts the necessary questions, when Claudio accuses the poor innocent Hero of unchastity, and repulses her hand with contemptuous phrases. Overpowered by this frightful accusation and humiliation, Hero sinks down in a death-like swoon. The Prince and Claudio, deceived by shameful treachery, depart indifferent, while the villainous traitor beholds with evil delight the pain he has inflicted. Only Benedick remains behind,—not on Hero's account, whose innocence he also doubts, as is plain from the question he puts to Beatrice, whether she slept on the fatal night in Hero's chamber,—but through sympathy for Beatrice, who he sees is deeply wounded by the degrading occurrence, and whom he longs to help. She recovers her resolute composure through this excitement, the true gold of her character is brilliantly proved. Her piercing insight does not allow her to doubt for an instant the innocence of her slandered friend. Instantly,

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when even the father, convinced by apparently irrefragable proof, believes in Hero's guilt, and covers her with abuse, she exclaims, "Oh, on my soul, my cousin is belied." After it has been decided, according to the friar's advice, that Hero be considered dead until her innocence is proved, Beatrice, who is left alone with Benedick, does not refuse to listen to his undisguised declaration of love, but will accede only on condition that he takes a bloody revenge on Claudio for the injury done to Hero. Her anger is heartfelt, but it also serves to delay her love confession, since she puts it off indirectly by saying, "Oh, that she were a man! or that she had any friend that would be a man for my sake!" Benedick is naturally ready to be convinced of Hero's innocence; he is firmly resolved to break Claudio's neck as soon as possible. Everything is right between the two. Benedick keeps his word; he challenges Claudio. But when the treachery of which Hero has been the victim comes to light (in how droll a fashion let the reader see for himself), and the marriage so tragically interrupted is happily completed, after Claudio had wept bitter tears of remorse for Hero supposed to be dead, and she, on returning to life, has forgiven her repentant lover, the merry declaration contrived for Benedick and Beatrice takes place, as at first arranged. These two wonderful creatures cannot, however, talk together like ordinary mortals. The serious side of life which met them in Hero's adventure had brought them nearer each other. Profound sympathy for her injured friend has turned Beatrice's love for Benedick into the right channel. Thus she is ready to waive all resistance, and acknowledge willingly and joyfully her love for him who has her heart. We take leave of this splendid couple with the satisfactory conviction, that in their union, following upon their prolonged conflict, they will find the happiness of their lives.

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SHAKESPEARE'S THIRD PERIOD

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CHAPTER VII

SHAKESPEARE'S THIRD PERIOD

The Women of the Roman Tragedies:—Volumnia—Virgilia—Portia—Cleopatra—Octavia

"CORIOLANUS"

SHAKESPEARE drew the material for three tragedies from Roman history. They depict, with wonderful fidelity, three entirely different epochs of Rome's development. *Coriolanus* deals with the time of the young Republic, when the virile virtues of Rome were nourished by heroic deeds abroad, while at home the virtuous, capable, but also hard and proud patricians were involved in their struggles against the rebellious plebeians. *Julius Cæsar* brings to view the dying Republic. *Antony and Cleopatra* the corrupt Roman world, ready to fall a prey to cunning and skilful politicians. Corresponding to these periods we find three fundamentally different female characters, each well delineated in her own way. Volumnia, the mother of Coriolanus, is a type of the ancient Roman matron, who becomes real to us by reason of her glowing love for her glorious son. But the sunbeam of this truly womanly sentiment only illuminates in passing the beautiful but cold and statuesque figure of this purely antique woman. That this feeling is far removed from modern sentiment is plain from Volumnia's words on her first appearance:

If my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour, than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love. When yet he was but tender-bodied and the only son of my womb,

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when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way, when for a day of kings' entreaties a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding, I, considering how honour would become such a person, that it was no better than picture-like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger, where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.—*Coriolanus*, act i. scene 3.

When the softer Virgilia asks her "Had he died in the business, madam, how then?" she answers unshaken:

Then his good report should have been my son; I therein would have found issue. Hear me profess sincerely: had I a dozen sons, each in my love alike, and none less dear than thine and my good Marcius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.—*Coriolanus*, act i. scene 3.

We see that, notwithstanding all her love for her mighty son, she regards him beyond all else as the strong arm that works heroic deeds for the fatherland, winning for himself immortal fame, throwing a proud light over all his family, and most of all over his mother. Noble ambition is the dominant feeling in this powerful woman's breast. It has so overgrown the softer and tenderer sentiments of her heart, that they only come to light at brief moments and at distant intervals. This ambition is often hard and severe, far removed from our ideas of womanly demeanour, and expresses itself in phrases better worthy of a rough soldier than a lady. Blood, she says, adorns a man better than trophies of gold. Farther on, the poet puts these words into her mouth:

Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum,
See him pluck Aufidius down by the hair,
As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him:
Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus:
'Come on, you cowards! you were got in fear,
Though you were born in Rome:' his bloody brow
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,
Like to a harvest-man that's task'd to mow
Or all or lose his hire.—*Coriolanus*, act i. scene 3.

We learn from these lines that contempt for the plebeians,

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the ruling characteristic of proud Coriolanus, rules as strongly in his mother's breast. She calls the Roman burgher-soldiers cowards, that must be driven into battle with hard words by their patrician leaders. Volumnia is certainly a wonderful presentation of the virtuous but rude spirit which filled the proud patricians. This temper it was, that from small and narrow beginnings, led Rome by irresistible steps to the empire of the world. But it was this temper also which, through conflicts with the plebeians, brought about frightful internal divisions. Still the poet must not be accused of erring from the truth, or of creating a character that was improbable or impossible in the Rome of that day, for beside the stern, proud, almost masculine matron, he has placed Virgilia, the wife of Coriolanus, a mild and tender feminine type. Shakespeare loves, above all things, to place contrasting female characters side by side. Thus he gives to the saucy Beatrice, overflowing with careless wit, the soft quiet Hero as a friend, and puts beside the courageous high-spirited Rosalind the calm and sentimental Celia. Virgilia is a soft delicately strung soul, proud of her husband and his fame, but willing to forego this fame if so she need not tremble for his life. The thought of blood is insupportable to her, while it has no terrors for the ambitious Volumnia, who calls it the finest ornament of man, and who has sent her noble only son into war and danger, saying that if he dies a hero's death his renown shall be her scion. But human nature has many varieties. In every good national community, be its general character never so sharply defined, there are always personalities who stray from the type. Thus Virgilia is a soft tender flower, which has grown out of the hard blood-bedewed soil of the Rome of that epoch. The fate of such persons, when it is not permitted to them to lead a quiet life in some subordinate place, hidden in fortunate obscurity, is generally tragic. Virgilia is struck down by a deadly blow that excites our profound sympathy,

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while Volumnia's fate arouses a feeling compounded of admiration and awe. A similar contrast between the two women appears when they are awaiting Marcius, who is returning covered with glory from the Volscian wars, wearing for the third time the Roman reward of bravery, the oaken crown, and bearing, also, the newly conferred surname Coriolanus, in memory of his heroic deeds before the conquered Volscian city, Corioli. To the remark of old Menenius, that "he was wont to come home wounded," Virgilia answers in frightened deprecation, "Oh no! no!" Volumnia, however, "thanks the gods that he is wounded," and recounts the numerous ones he received in former battles. When welcomed by the patricians with high honours, he enters triumphantly; his mother meets him with eloquent and appropriate phrases; Virgilia in her joy has nothing to give but silent tears, therefore he says to her, "My gracious silence, hail!" and asks rather reproachfully "would she have laughed had he come coffined home, that she weeps to see him triumph?" The highest goal a Roman citizen can attain in the State, the dignity of Consul, stands close before his eyes, and his ambitious mother anticipates this with unconcealed pride. Here is plainly marked the difference between male and female ambition, let the woman have as many masculine qualities as she may. Volumnia sees her son, already seated in the curule chair, raised to the position of one of the rulers of the State, in which he, the hero, crowned with fame and victory, must naturally take the first and most prominent place; she sees only the outward show, the high honour. Coriolanus looks deeper; he perceives clearly and sharply the terrible struggle which will precede this step. He knows that, proud as he is, and full of contempt for the lower classes, in spite of all the aristocratic reserve of his nature, he must, before his election to the consulate, seek the support of the plebeians, who are embittered by sordid cares, by the continual pressure of war-taxes, and roused and excited by the preaching of

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demagogues and ambitious and envious Tribunes. The means, too, which, according to Roman custom, every patrician must take to win the popular votes—the circuit of the Forum in person to beg for these votes in familiar and friendly manner, the exhibition of the wounds gained in the service of the country—all this is hateful to him. Yet he knows that such steps are unavoidable by any one who aspires to the consulate. He reconciles himself to these proceedings with unconcealed dislike; they seem to him humiliating—his proud spirit detests them. He declares he would rather be their slave in his own way—that is, not at the summit of the state, than be, in their way, their ruler—that is, made Consul after all the humiliation he must go through to reach this goal, which is brilliant only in appearance. Volumnia, however, who, despite all her magnanimity and pride, is a woman, has in view only the splendid position. She deems it natural and comprehensible that her son, notwithstanding his renown and greatness, should follow the ancient custom. This gives her another reason to rejoice over his numerous wounds, for these will be large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place. The Senate nominate Coriolanus, Consul. It only remains for him to canvass the populace to confirm the nomination. Coriolanus objects strongly to this act of condescension, partly, because impelled by patrician pride, partly also, as his words reveal, from a political motive, he desires to change the Roman form of government, already oppressive to the people, to a pure aristocracy, conceiving it possible to seize the important occasion of a consular choice in order to direct matters into a more patrician and less plebeian channel. When he says, "It is a part that I shall blush in acting," he continues, "it might well be taken from the people," meaning that the election of the Consul should be removed entirely from their control, and be given to the Senate exclusively. Brutus, the people's Tribune, immediately seizes the sense and bearing of this

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passing remark, and calls attention to its inimical tendency. Coriolanus at last consents, at his friends' entreaties, to take the hated step. But his manner, the words in which he calls attention to the wounds received in his country's service, betray more hatred and contempt for the common people than desire to win their favour. The citizens, who are portrayed by Shakespeare as a wavering crowd, unripe for political power, and wanting in strength and firmness, feel flattered for the moment by the seeming affability of the foremost man in Rome, and grant him their voices. But scarcely has Coriolanus with his patrician friends entered the Senate to complete his election as Consul by a formal inauguration, than the temper of the crowd changes. The Tribunes incite them, pointing out the scorn and contempt which lay hidden under the candidate's apparent humility. They remind them of the danger incurred by choosing as Consul one who had declared openly in the Senate his intention to deprive them of their right of choice, and "to make them of no more voice than dogs that are as often beat for barking, as therefore kept to do." The populace, thus stirred, becomes angered against Coriolanus, and resolves to annul the election. When Licinius and Brutus, the Tribunes, bear this news to the Senate, where the solemn confirmation of Coriolanus's election has already taken place, his angry contempt for the populace breaks forth, in spite of all the efforts of his patrician friends to calm him. His fury is a reaction from the self-control he had exerted in order to bring himself to canvass for the popular vote. He bursts into violent invective against all the safeguards of popular freedom, against the appointment of Tribunes, the distribution of corn. The Tribunes pronounce him guilty of high treason. After a first attack on the part of the mob, led by the Tribunes, has been repulsed by the patricians, who rallied round Coriolanus, they return boldly to the attack, so that, in order to avert the threatening storm, it becomes necessary for Coriolanus to retract his expressions, and to

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make excuses to the people. This step is counselled by his patrician friends, and even by his haughty mother. The character of Volumnia is here shown in quite a new light. Until now we have beheld Coriolanus the true son of his mother, resembling her in all prominent traits of character. We now perceive that she has superior qualities, indispensable to a great man, if he is to win lasting success, namely, self-control and wise moderation, "which puts power well on before it wears it out." She says to her angry son:

> You might have been enough the man you are,
> With striving less to be so: lesser had been
> The thwartings of your dispositions, if
> You had not show'd them how ye were disposed
> Ere they lack'd power to cross you.
>
> *Coriolanus*, act iii. scene 2.

Her heart is as hard and unbending as his, but she has yet a brain that lends her use of anger to better vantage. She conjures him, with deep insight and great eloquence, to submit once more to humiliation before the people and their Tribunes, which his friends consider as the only method of saving the man and the state. She reminds him how she has heard him say, "honour and policy, like unsevered friends, in war do grow together." "Tell me," she says, "in peace what each of them by the other lose, that they combine not there? If it be honour in war to seem what you are not, how is it less or worse that policy shall hold companionship in peace with honour as in war, since that to both it stands in like request?" She begs him speak to the people:

> Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,
> But with such words that are but roted in
> Your tongue, though but bastards, and syllables
> Of no allowance to your bosom's truth.
> Now, this no more dishonours you at all
> Than to take in a town with gentle words,
> Which else would put you to your fortune and
> The hazard of much blood.
> I would dissemble with my nature where
> My fortunes and my friends at stake required

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I should do so in honour: I am in this,
Your wife, your son, these senators, the nobles;
And you will rather show our general louts
How you can frown than spend a fawn upon 'em,
For the inheritance of their loves and safeguard
Of what that want might ruin.—*Coriolanus*, act iii. scene 2.

Volumnia rises above her son in this scene. She knows how to distinguish between the true pride of a virtuous man, which consists in ever winning new honour through new deeds of valour, and that false pride to which Coriolanus gives way in his anger. The pride that refuses to yield momentarily in order to obtain great results is nothing but self-conceit, which will make no sacrifices, which will not for an instant descend from its heights. This is the pride to which Volumnia refers when she says, seeing that he remains obstinate:

At thy choice, then:
To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour
Than thou of them. Come all to ruin; let
Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear
Thy dangerous stoutness, for I mock at death
With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list.
Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,
But owe thy pride thyself.—*Coriolanus*, act iii. scene 2.

He yields at last, and appears before the people; but when the Tribunes call him traitor, when they reproach him with his intending to curtail the freedom of Rome, and "wind himself into a power tyrannical," his fury breaks all bounds. After the people, instigated by the Tribunes, have pronounced upon him sentence of perpetual banishment, he pours forth all the poison concealed within him on the hated and despised plebeians. But the tempest of public wrath is for the moment irresistible. Coriolanus must leave the city. On parting from his family and friends, the difference between Volumnia and Virgilia appears once more. The wife only weeps, "O heavens! O heavens!" in her grief for her husband; Volumnia invokes pestilence and death

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upon all trades and occupations in Rome. It seems that any misfortune which might befall the crew that has so ill rewarded her brave son would be welcome to her. She wished the gods "had nothing else to do but to confirm her curses." She bids her daughter-in-law "leave this faint puling, and lament as she does, in anger, Juno-like." She appears ready to pull down the walls of Rome with her own hands. But matters take another turn. The great work of Volumnia's life, to be the saviour, the second founder of Rome, is still before her. Coriolanus, on his banishment, has fled to the Volscians, who receive with acclamations the deadly enemy who has worked them so much evil, now that he is banished and filled with rage against ungrateful Rome. They place him, together with their own hero, Aufidius, at the head of an army that is to avenge him and the defeated Volscians. The avengers soon appear before the city. Danger and need are at their height. Every mediation of Roman friends is repulsed. Even old Menenius, Coriolanus's dearest friend, who has sought the camp in the firm conviction that he can persuade him, is not allowed to speak. In order to understand what follows, and the true meaning of the change worked in Coriolanus by Volumnia, it is necessary to form a clear idea of the situation. When the Roman hero, seeking revenge for his injured self-love and disappointed ambition, leads the army of his enemies against his own city, he falls under the curse that awaits all traitors. In moments of reflection he is tormented with the distressing conviction, that he has stained his honour for ever through his alliance with his enemies, and has lost his right to be handed down to posterity as a great and noble man. On the other hand, he is not free. He knows himself to be an object of mistrust to his new friends, who believe him capable of betraying them, since he has betrayed his own country. They carefully watch all his movements, listen anxiously to all his words. How humiliating for Coriolanus is the short scene between him and

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Aufidius, in which he seems to ask a testimonial from his companion-in-arms:

> *Cor.* We will before the walls of Rome to-morrow
> Set down our host. My partner in this action,
> You must report to the Volscian lords, how plainly
> I have borne this business.
> *Auf.* Only their ends
> You have respected; stopp'd your ears against
> The general suit of Rome; never admitted
> A private whisper, no, not with such friends
> That thought them sure of you.
> *Cor.* This last old man,
> Whom with a crack'd heart I have sent to Rome,
> Loved me above the measure of a father;
> Nay, godded me, indeed. Their latest refuge
> Was to send him; for whose old love I have,
> Though I show'd sourly to him, once more offer'd
> The first conditions, which they did refuse,
> And cannot now accept; to grace him only
> That thought he could do more, a very little
> I have yielded to: fresh embassies and suits,
> Nor from the state nor private friends, hereafter
> Will I lend ear to. [*Shout within.*
> Ha! what shout is this?
> Shall I be tempted to infringe my vow
> In the same time 'tis made? I will not.
>
> *Coriolanus*, act v. scene 3.

But in one thing he has deceived himself. Old Menenius was not the last resource of the Romans to induce him to change his mind. A stronger besieger is to attack his heart, to which he must ultimately yield. A group of women approach the camp, clad in deepest mourning. At their head walk his mother and wife, leading by the hand his little son. This is the most important scene of the whole drama. Here the pure gold of Volumnia's heart comes to view athwart the hard covering which ambition, pride, prejudice, and the naturally bitter feelings caused by the ingratitude with which Coriolanus has been treated, have woven round it. This matron, so bitterly enraged, so vindictive, so deeply injured by her fellow-townsmen, so ready to call down curses on their heads, now offers for their redemp-

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tion, and for the eternal rights of the fatherland, not only her love, but what is more, her hatred. Thus she stands, a great, a truly antique figure. She far outreaches in nobility and strength of mind the man she has gone to implore. The conduct of this scene is masterly, and deserves careful examination. The sight of the beloved ones who have come to turn from his ungrateful country the unavoidable destruction that threatens, shakes Coriolanus to his depths:

> My wife comes foremost; then the honour'd mould
> Wherein this trunk was framed, and in her hand
> The grandchild to her blood. But, out, affection!
> All bond and privilege of nature, break!
> Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.
> What is that court'sy worth? or those doves' eyes,
> Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not
> Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows;
> As if Olympus to a molehill should
> In supplication nod: and my young boy
> Hath an aspect of intercession, which
> Great nature cries, 'Deny not.' Let the Volsces
> Plough Rome and harrow Italy: I'll never
> Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand,
> As if a man were author of himself,
> And knew no other kin.—*Coriolanus*, act v. scene 3.

At the sight of the ladies and the boy, Coriolanus feels that the hardest fight of all is now before him. He is deeply moved when his mother, who, according to Roman custom, has a right to all observance and respect from her son, kneels before him. At first he hardens himself against her entreaties; he says, "I beseech you, peace: or, if you'd ask, remember this before; the things I have forsworn to grant may never be held by your denials." He cannot dismiss his soldiers or "capitulate again with Rome's mechanics." They must not try "to allay his rages and revenges with colder reasons." Volumnia interrupts him passionately:

> O, no more, no more!
> You have said you will not grant us anything;
> For we have nothing else to ask but that

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> Which you deny already: yet we will ask;
> That, if you fail in our request, the blame
> May hang upon your hardness: therefore hear us.
>
> *Coriolanus*, act v. scene 3.

She speaks with moving eloquence in favour of the threatened city. She points to the mourning garments, the pale faces, showing plainly what a life of suffering they led since his departure. More unhappy than were ever women, they come before him, the sight of whom should fill their hearts with joy, but whom now they behold with pain and terror. "Making the mother, wife, and child to see the son, the husband, and the father tearing his country's bowels out." "We," she says weeping, "we are those on whom it comes the hardest; we cannot even pray to the gods. How can we pray for our country, to which we are bound, or for thy victory, to which we are bound? Either thou must fail or the country must. But thou art our comfort in our country. We must find calamity, even if we had our wish which side should win." He must, she says, either be led in manacles through the streets, a foreign miscreant, or he must tread triumphantly upon his country's ruin, and bear the palm for shedding the blood of wife and child. She declares her firm purpose not to outlive the close of the war; he shall not assault his country, without treading on the body of the mother who has brought him into the world. Now springs up in the gentle Virgilia pain and despair for her country, and she speaks out, a true Roman matron. "Ay! and mine, that brought you forth this boy, to keep your name living to time." With naïve defiance, as touching perhaps to Coriolanus as the words of mother and wife, the little hero exclaims, "He shall not tread on me; I'll run away 'till I am bigger, but then I'll fight!" Coriolanus, who feels his resolution failing, wishes to retire, but Volumnia restrains him, and then utters the words which contain the guiding motive of the whole drama, and express the everlasting fundamental

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laws before which even the most savage human passions must be silent:

> If it were so that our request did tend
> To save the Romans, thereby to destroy
> The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us,
> As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit
> Is, that you reconcile them: while the Volsces
> May say, 'This mercy we have show'd;' the Romans,
> 'This we received;' and each in either side
> Give the all-hail to thee, and cry, 'Be blest
> For making up this peace!' Thou know'st, great son,
> The end of war's uncertain, but this certain,
> That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit
> Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name,
> Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;
> Whose chronicle thus writ: 'The man was noble,
> But with his last attempt he wiped it out;
> Destroy'd his country, and his name remains
> To the ensuing age abhorr'd.'—*Coriolanus*, act v. scene 3.

With stern words she reminds him of his debt to her, the reverence and obedience a man owes his mother:

> There's no man in the world
> More bound to 's mother; yet here he lets me prate
> Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
> Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy,
> When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
> Hast cluck'd thee to the wars and safely home,
> Loaden with honour. Say my request's unjust,
> And spurn me back: but if it be not so,
> Thou art not honest; and the gods will plague thee,
> That thou restrain'st from me the duty which
> To a mother's part belongs. He turns away:
> Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.
> *Coriolanus*, act v. scene 3.

Once more let us condescend to the pitiless man:

> To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride
> Than pity to our prayers. Down; an end:
> This is the last.

In helpless despair she says:

> So we will home to Rome,
> And die among our neighbours. . . .
> Come, let us go."

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And then at last come bitter scorn and threats of a mother's curse:

> This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
> His wife is in Corioli, and his child
> Like him by chance. Yet give us our despatch:
> I am hush'd until our city be afire,
> And then I'll speak a little.—*Coriolanus*, act v. scene 3.

She has won the victory, a saving victory for Rome, but fatal to her son. He makes peace, and returns to Corioli, to become the victim of his rival. The mother, however, with his wife and little son, return to Rome, where they are hailed as saviours, and laden with honours. After the death of Coriolanus the poet does not let us see the women again. But we can divine from what we saw and heard, beyond doubt, what their future conduct and fate would be. Virgilia did not long outlive her husband; her gentle spirit could not bear the shock. But Volumnia even in this trial will have shown her strength; she will not regret for a moment that she allowed her son to go back to certain death. Her son is sacrificed, but Rome is saved. This thought will sustain her; she will find consolation in the memory of her son's renown. Her whole mind will be devoted to rearing her grandson, for whom his mother will be able to do but little, so that he may be a worthy heir to this renown. She will plant in this young soul the seeds of those noble impulses which made his father great and worthy of honour, until he suffered shipwreck on the rock of unmeasured pride and uncontrolled passion. Volumnia will die as she lived, the model of a true antique Roman matron.

"JULIUS CÆSAR"

Portia

Coriolanus is the representative of that patrician virtue which, in the days of the young republic, laid the foundation of the future greatness of Rome by heroic deeds abroad,

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but which, by its pride and severity, brought about frightful conflicts within. In the second of Shakespeare's Roman plays, *Julius Cæsar*, Brutus stands as the single ideal of manhood in an age of decadence. In unison with him, but not as the weaker ivy which clings to the oak, but growing happily beside him as a sister-stem, stands Portia, Cato's daughter, Brutus's wife. Portia, in mind and training, is his worthy helpmate. Her true Roman action of wounding herself in order to gain her husband's confidence by her patient endurance of suffering, and also the manner of her death, invests her with something which, to our ideas, is almost unnatural. The poet has described Portia with a few touches; we see her in two scenes only, but these suffice to furnish us with a satisfactory idea as to the character of this heroic female figure. The first scene vividly recalls a scene in *Henry IV*. The young Percy intends to rebel against the King; his young wife comes before him, and complains that recently he has been too deeply absorbed in his wild thoughts and plans, and has neglected her:

> O, my good lord, why are you thus alone?
> For what offence have I this fortnight been
> A banish'd woman from my Harry's bed?
> Tell me, sweet lord, what is't that takes from thee
> Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?
> Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,
> And start so often when thou sitt'st alone?
> Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks;
> And given my treasures and my rights of thee
> To thick-eyed musing and cursed melancholy?
> In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watch'd,
> And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars;
> Speak terms of manage to thy bounding steed;
> Cry 'Courage! to the field!' And thou hast talk'd
> Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,
> Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
> Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,
> Of prisoners' ransom and of soldiers slain,
> And all the currents of a heady fight.
> Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,
> And thus hath so bestirr'd thee in thy sleep,
> That beads of sweat hath stood upon thy brow,

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Like bubbles in a late-disturbed stream;
And in thy face strange motions have appear'd,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest. O, what portents are these?
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not.

First Part of Henry IV., act ii. scene 3.

The scene between Brutus and Portia resembles this. Brutus also has been for some time in continual excitement, the cause of which he conceals from his wife. His heart is torn by a sharp struggle between his love for freedom, which he believes threatened by Cæsar, and his affection for the great man, to whom he stood in the relation of friend, nay, almost of son. Unlike many of the conspirators, he was not filled with hatred and envy against Cæsar. He joined the conspiracy with great reluctance, yielding to the skilful arguments of Cassius, whose temperament was much less idealistic than his own. He was persuaded to believe that the Republic could still be saved by the murder of Cæsar, who aspired to a despotism. While he was thus inwardly storm-tossed, his wife Portia had watched with deep anxiety the signs of this long conflict. But now the die is cast; Brutus has become the head of the conspiracy. Its members have just left him late at night in his garden, where the last meeting has taken place. The terrible deed is fixed for the next day. Brutus has remained in the garden. Here his wife joins him:

You've ungently, Brutus,
Stole from my bed; and yesternight, at supper,
You suddenly arose, and walk'd about,
Musing and sighing, with your arms across,
And when I ask'd you what the matter was,
You stared upon me with ungentle looks:
I urged you further; then you scratch'd your head,
And too impatiently stamp'd with your foot;
Yet I insisted, yet you answer'd not,
But, with an angry wafture of your hand,
Gave sign for me to leave you; so I did;
Fearing to strengthen that impatience
Which seem'd so much enkindled, and withal

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Hoping it was but an effect of humour,
Which sometime hath his hour with every man.
It will not let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep,
And could it work so much upon your shape
As it hath much prevail'd on your condition,
I should not know you, Brutus. Dear my lord,
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.

Julius Cæsar, act ii. scene 1.

The further progress of the two scenes brings out the relation between Portia and Brutus more clearly than that between Percy and his wife. Percy puts off his wife with playful and not too tender phrases. Brutus, at Portia's earnest entreaty, gives her his full confidence. How grandly she conceives her right to share his troubles and cares:

You have some sick offence within your mind,
Which, by the right and virtue of my place,
I ought to know of; and, upon my knees,
I charm you, by my once-commended beauty,
By all your vows of love, and that great vow
Which did incorporate and make us one,
That you unfold to me, yourself, your half,
Why you are heavy, and what men to-night
Have had resort to you: for here have been
Some six or seven, who did hide their faces
Even from darkness.
Bru. Kneel not, gentle Portia.
Por. I should not need, if you were gentle Brutus.
Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,
Is it excepted I should know no secrets
That appertain to you? Am I yourself
But, as it were, in sort or limitation,
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs
Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,
Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.

Julius Cæsar, act ii. scene 1.

With proud self-confidence she concludes:

I grant I am a woman; but withal
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife;
I grant I am a woman; but withal
A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter.
Think you I am no stronger than my sex,
Being so father'd and so husbanded?

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> Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose 'em:
> I have made strong proof of my constancy,
> Giving myself a voluntary wound
> Here, in the thigh: can I bear that with patience,
> And not my husband's secrets?—*Julius Cæsar*, act ii. scene i.

Brutus prays the gods to render him worthy of such heroism. He feels it is more than he can resist, and confides to her the awful secret. This scene fills us with wondering admiration for the mighty being who seems to tower above her sex. But precisely because of this superiority, this greatness, she seems more manly than womanly, and inspires us with something like estrangement. We admire her without feeling true and warm sympathy. But in the second short scene, the poet endows the beautiful but cold traits of this powerful creature with a warm glow of life, so that she who hitherto has only appealed to our intellects, now wins the deep sympathy of our hearts. He does this by showing that his heroine inclines to a small but infinitely lovable female weakness. The Ides of March are come. Brutus has gone to accompany Cæsar to the fatal sitting of the Senate. Every minute may bring the news that Cæsar has been slain, or that the conspiracy has failed and her husband lost. She sends her page to the Capitol, but forgets to tell him her message. The heroic-minded woman is in such agonised anxiety that she knows not what she says. She feels that she has "a man's mind but a woman's might." All these sensations bring her nearer our hearts. We see in the mighty figure a tender loving woman, whose victory over her sex seems much greater when we recognise its difficulty.

"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

Cleopatra—Octavia

Shakespeare's third Roman play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, is laid in the time of Rome's decadence. The last republicans had fallen at Philippi; the selfish schemes of ambitious

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usurpers guided events; the victory belonged to the coldest, most cunning politician. Corresponding to this, is brought before us a female character entirely opposed to the Roman type. But, precisely because she is an Egyptian and a barbarian, she has caught the Roman hero in her toils through the power of her charms, and has caused a man, born with all the qualities which lead to greatness, to belie himself to his own ruin. She thus embodies the extent to which Rome had grown corrupt even in the person of her best men. Cleopatra had loved Cæsar in her youth. Antony meets her in her full-blown maturity of beauty, as the experienced priestess of exuberant sensual enjoyment, in which refined coquetry, wild passion, and great sense of beauty are united to produce a lasting ever-new impression. How experienced she is in the wiles of fascination, luxury, art, and prodigality, is shown in the description of her meeting with Antony:

> The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
> Burn'd on the water; the poop was beaten gold;
> Purple the sails, and so perfumèd that
> The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
> Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
> The water which they beat to follow faster,
> As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
> It beggar'd all description; she did lie
> In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold of tissue—
> O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
> The fancy outwork nature; on each side her
> Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
> With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
> To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
> And what they undid did.
> Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
> So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
> And made their bends adornings; at the helm
> A seeming mermaid steers; the silken tackle
> Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands,
> That yarely frame the office. From the barge
> A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
> Of the adjacent wharfs.—*Antony and Cleopatra*, act ii. scene 2.

I quote a few more lines, which the poet also puts into

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the mouth of Enobarbus, because they complete Cleopatra's portrait, by adding the sketch of her inner nature to that of her outward appearance:

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety; other women cloy
> The appetites they feed; but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies; for vilest things
> Become themselves in her; that the holy priests
> Bless her when she is riggish.
>
> *Antony and Cleopatra*, act ii. scene 2.

But her intellectual fascinations are no less inexhaustible. Her passionate moods follow each other with such rapid variety, that they never leave time to criticise her want of moral sense. Besides maintaining the sentiment she has inspired in Antony ever fresh and new, by all the refined arts of an experienced coquette, she never allows him to know a moment's satiety or monotony owing to the perpetual contradiction of her whims. Her crises of jealous fury, the renewal of passion inseparable from the reconciliations that follow, full of every form of boundless and varied tenderness, leave no room for indifference. She neglects no wiles, anything will do, tears, sulks, swoons, every weapon in the arsenal of feminine charm is brought into the field. Indifferent, in true woman's fashion, to all logic, she brings forward the same accusations on the most contrary grounds. If he has betrayed his wife Fulvia for her sake, how can she believe his oaths, though he should shake with them the throne of the gods? It were pure insanity to believe such promises, that are broken in the swearing. And then, when he shows indifference at the news of Fulvia's death, when he says that to die was the best thing she could do, she is displeased at this indifference, and says that "she can see in Fulvia's death how hers received will be."

Cleopatra's behaviour to Antony is certainly deliberately planned. She is playing a part, but she is, nevertheless, filled with a passionate love. She hangs upon him with the

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whole uncontrolled devotion of a sensual, spoilt woman; she does not care only for the possession of his power and his treasures. The arts of coquetry seem almost ennobled through her fire of passion. A masterpiece of characterisation is the scene in which she questions the messenger who brought the news of Antony's marriage to Octavia, about the appearance of Octavia, and her delight because his report is unfavourable. After many discordant passages, her voluntary death reconciles us to her at the close. She brings about Antony's defeat at the battle of Actium by her cowardly flight; she drives him to suicide by a false report of her death; she tries to deceive Octavius Cæsar as to the amount of his booty, while playing the part of a humble suitor. At last, when she perceives that her attempts to enslave a third great Roman by her charms offer no prospect of success with "the dull cold-blooded Cæsar," and that she has only been spared to grace his triumph in Rome, her proud and royal heart revolts. She dies a freely chosen death.

Octavia, the sister of Octavius Cæsar, Antony's second wife, belongs to the type that has given rise to the proverb that the best women are those of whom the least is said. Little can be said about Octavia, but there is no need to say more. Her character, her truly womanly nature, lies before us clear and pure, like a speckless mirror. She is the antipodes of Cleopatra; the one all passion, sensuality, love of pleasure; the other all peace of mind, virtue, delight in quiet domestic happiness. Devotedly attached to her dear brother, she hopes, through her marriage with Antony, to increase the happiness of both, and to bring about the peace of the world. She is sincerely fond of Antony; she knows how to prize his gifts and qualities; she hopes, as is the way with good women, to cure him, through her influence, of the sins and weaknesses which have stained his life. She hopes, in short, like a good angel, to stand aiding and reconciling between him and her brother. But

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she is far from loving him with passion; she knows nothing of passion. It is plain, from the beginning, that so unequal a marriage can never fulfil the hopes based upon it. Antony is not in a position to appreciate Octavia's good and noble qualities. Her virtue, which he deems coldness, repels him, accustomed as he is to the passion and sensuous glow of Cleopatra. She cannot retain him long at her side. Her influence is not strong enough to stem the fresh conflict between him and her brother. Her personality is not calculated to content a man who, like Antony, ever thirsts for warm, inexhaustible, fresh delights. He goes back to the arms of Cleopatra. The heart of the unhappy wife breaks under the shock of the hostile meeting of the two men, whose reconciliation her high pure womanly nature had set before her as a sacred task.

THE GREAT TRAGEDIES

"MACBETH"

Lady Macbeth

In solitary grandeur, a species by herself, stands the most powerful of Shakespeare's women, Lady Macbeth. One savage, insatiable passion, ambition, rules her soul and overpowers every gentler feeling, dragging her into the crime which shall set on her head the crown, the bright object of her uncontrolled longing. She breaks through all bounds of worldly prudence; she sins against gratitude towards the good king who, with such kindness and good-will, has raised her husband to greatness. She breaks the law of hospitality to the grey-headed man who visits trustfully under her roof. She supports the evil spirit of her husband; she encourages him when his weaker nature shrinks before the awful crime, even at the moment of its execution. She is a fearful incarnation of evil and savage passion. But we should mis-

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understand the poet and his great creation, if we regarded Lady Macbeth only as a remorseless monster who stands outside the pale of sympathy; if we look on her only as the clever murderess, and regard her husband merely as a being led astray by an ambitious wife. This is not the true way. We will proceed to seek, as usual, from the analysis of the whole tragedy, the right standpoint whence to consider these terrible figures. Scotland is ruled by a mild and benevolent old man, Duncan, against whom an ambitious vassal, the Thane of Cawdor, has risen in rebellion, supported by a foreign enemy, the Duke of Norway. The rebellion and foreign invasion are both defeated by Duncan's generals, Macbeth and Banquo. The play opens in a gloomy, unhallowed key, upon a wild heath, on which, while the decisive battle is raging in the vicinity, all the hostile forces of nature, tempest, thunder, and lightning, are let loose. Three witches prepare to accost Macbeth on his return from the field. In the second scene the old king is informed of the victory, by a sorely wounded warrior, who narrates to him Macbeth's wonderful deeds of valour, through which it was achieved. In reward Macbeth receives the title and estates of the rebellious Thane of Cawdor. After this the witches meet the two generals, Macbeth and Banquo, returning from the battlefield. Although the latter is the first to speak to them, they turn to Macbeth with the prophecies which are to prove so fatal. "Hail, Thane of Glamis!" says one. "Hail, Thane of Cawdor!" cries the second. "Hail, Macbeth! who shall be king hereafter," adds the third with fatal voice. While Macbeth stands dumbfounded at this enigmatical utterance, Banquo addresses the uncanny creatures, and asks them, since they have predicted so brilliant a future for his brother-in-arms, to tell his fortune also. He neither begs, he says, their favours nor their hate, but it is evident that he is strongly moved by the prophecies addressed to Macbeth, and is anxious to see a bright future opening before himself

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also. The effect of the prophecy is different upon Banquo, whose character is the opposite of Macbeth's. Once more a mysterious message comes from the weird lips—"Lesser than Macbeth and greater"—"Not so happy, yet much happier." "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none." Macbeth now awakes from the dumb enchantment into which he had fallen. He speaks with passionate earnestness to the three witches. "By Sinel (his father's) death, I know I am Thane of Glamis, but how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives, a prosperous gentleman; and to be king stands not within the prospect of belief, no more than to be Cawdor. Speak, I charge you!" But, without saying another word, the eerie creatures vanish, "as breath into the wind." Now begins the fulfilment of the prediction. A royal messenger arrives bringing Macbeth word, in the king's name, that he had been created Thane in place of Cawdor, executed for his rebellion. "Glamis and Cawdor! the greatest is behind," says Macbeth, while unhallowed thoughts already begin to stir within him. The different effect of the prophecies upon the two men is at once visible. When Macbeth asks of Banquo whether, now that he has seen the startling rapidity with which a part of the prophecy concerning him is accomplished, he does not begin to hope that his part will also be fulfilled, Banquo answers quietly:

> That trusted home
> Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
> Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange;
> And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
> The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
> Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's
> In deepest consequence.—*Macbeth*, act i. scene 3.

Banquo fully understands the danger of being misled by such prophecies. They lead, by an appearance of truth, to fatal resolutions and acts, which in their turn lead to frightful disillusions. Banquo is ready to await any fortune, whether the prophecy fulfil itself or no. He will not move,

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to bring about its consummation. In Macbeth, on the contrary, the promptings of ambition arouse horrible thoughts. He is already occupied with the question whether, since the lesser prediction has been verified, the greater, more brilliant one may not come true, and he is not the man to await events quietly, like Banquo, but must hasten them on by his own action:

> Two truths are told,
> As happy prologues to the swelling act
> Of the imperial theme. . . . .
> This supernatural soliciting
> Cannot be ill, cannot be good; if ill,
> Why hath it given me earnest of success,
> Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:
> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature? Present fears
> Are less than horrible imaginings:
> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man that function
> Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
> But what is not.—*Macbeth*, act i. scene 3.

We see plainly that the idea of a terrible crime, through which the third brilliant prediction shall be accomplished, is taking definite form in his mind. The suggestions of his wife are not, therefore, necessary to originate the murderer's plan. The idea lies already dormant in his mind before they meet, the effect of the ambition which has long slumbered, and which the hellish witches have fanned into a flame. This ambition, and not Lady Macbeth, is the intellectual originator of the crime, and its guilt is more equally shared than at first seems. We see from the above soliloquy why Lady Macbeth, as the tragedy progresses, appears to be the more guilty of the two. Macbeth is appalled at the idea of murder; his whole being rebels against it, his hair stands on end, his heart knocks at his ribs. The weakness of his nature revolts from the

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crime to which ambition incites him. He has neither the terrible resolution nor the mighty energy of criminal will which animates Lady Macbeth. His conscience shrinks from the deed, while the brilliant goal, the crown, is ever before her eyes and drowns the voice of conscience, awakened in her too late, with terrible pangs of remorse. The brilliant English authoress who has written that valuable book on Shakespeare's female characters was right when she said: "If Lady Macbeth appears later as the most guilty, it is not because she is more remorseless, but because she has more strength of mind."

Fortune in the meantime seems leagued with the weird sisters to lend Macbeth a hand towards the crime yet undeveloped in the wild tempest of his thoughts; she offers an opportunity for its performance as favourable as could be conceived. The old king receives the victorious general in gracious fashion. He informs him that he has resolved to confer upon him, in token of gratitude for his brilliant services to himself and the state, the highest honour a subject can receive from his sovereign. He intends to visit him and his lady at their castle of Inverness, and to spend the night under their roof. This scene also throws a light, not to be overlooked, upon Macbeth's character, and is useful in judging the respective parts taken by himself and his wife in the crime they commit. King Duncan informs the assembled nobles that he has chosen his eldest son, Malcolm, as his heir, and has bestowed on him the title of Prince of Cumberland. Here follows this soliloquy from Macbeth:

> The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step
> On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
> For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;
> Let not light see my black and deep desires:
> The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
> Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.
>
> *Macbeth*, act i. scene 4.

These words reveal clearly the contradictions in his

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character, the terrible fight between good and evil, waged in the depths of his nature. He longs for what he aims at, but shrinks from the means through which it must be attained. We see at once how far his criminal intentions have already gone, for Malcolm, the heir to the throne, can only stand in his way when Duncan, the actual possessor, is removed. On the other hand, Macbeth dares not look in the face the terrible deed he plans. A far-reaching weakness shows itself side by side with the intention to commit the crime. His wife knows this weakness, and with wonderful clearness of vision she judges him. He fears to let the sun see his wished-for crime—nay, would not have his eye see his hand which will carry out his wishes. He wishes it done, but shrinks from the sight. Quite otherwise was Lady Macbeth's behaviour. The poet shows her in her castle, reading the letter in which her husband narrates all that has happened, pronouncing her clear-sighted judgment on the meeting with the witches, and their prophecy already in some degree fulfilled. I must here call attention to the very intimate union which exists between Macbeth and his wife. The tone in which he writes to her of the meeting with the witches and their predictions shows deep love and perfect trust. "This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou might'st not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell." This intimate relation between the pair continues through the whole tragedy, and always arouses our lively sympathy, even at the moments in which their common crimes fill us with horror. Their faithful constancy in spite of their crimes, throws a softening veil, as it were, over the whole terrible story, and make us judge this pair more mildly, as not ignoble by nature, but drawn into evil paths through unbridled ambition. The manner in which Lady Macbeth receives the wonderful announcement made by her husband discloses two sides of her nature. Her sharp

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judgment strikes us first. She knows her husband, with all his good and bad qualities, perfectly well; she fears his heart, which is "too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way" to the wished-for end. She is, she says, not without ambition, but without the "illness should attend it." He would like to win his evil end, "holily," "would not play false, and yet would wrongly win." On the other hand, she shows herself to be entirely free from any such reflections, which she calls weaknesses, and she relies upon her eloquence to inspire him with her own resolution to remove from his way all that divides him from the throne fortune intends for him. A certain spice of womanliness is not wanting. She desires the throne, not for herself, but for her husband. She does not speak of herself, only of him, and his future greatness. She does not yet know that so favourable an opportunity for carrying out her terrible intention will soon be offered. The news brought by the messenger, that Duncan will arrive that evening at the castle to spend the night, appears at first incredible. As she becomes convinced of the truth, she shows herself in her whole fearful nature, in the full power of her evil will:

> The raven himself is hoarse
> That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
> Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
> Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry 'Hold, hold!'—*Macbeth*, act i. scene 5.

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The last lines make it quite clear that the awful woman is ready to commit the crime herself should Macbeth hesitate. She denies her humanity; with outrageous pride she will stop the way of remorse. She is destined to be flung helpless against the everlasting laws, the undying laws of right and humanity, which call down on her the fearful sentence which she, denying her womanhood, thinks to defy. In the following scene with her husband she develops a proud and glowing eloquence, a skilful sophistry which beats down all his arguments, a strength of nerve that is almost supernatural, filling us with a strange awe, compounded of wonder and repulsion. Macbeth evidently has not yet found courage to do the decisive deed. She asks him, after he tells her of the king's immediate coming, with a terrible meaning he quite understands, "And when goes he hence?" He answers irresolutely, not daring to look his determined wife in the face, "To-morrow, as he purposes." Then the demoniacal counsellor breaks out:

> O, never
> Shall sun that morrow see!
> Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
> May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
> Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
> Your hand, your tongue; look like the innocent flower,
> But be the serpent under 't. He that's coming
> Must be provided for; and you shall put
> This night's great business into my dispatch;
> Which shall to all our nights and days to come
> Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.
>
> *Macbeth*, act i. scene 5.

Immense is the effect of the contrast of this serious scene, in which the evil pair arrange their crime, with the quiet entrance of Duncan, the grey-haired king, who, in complete confidence, enters the house of his vassal and kinsman, upon whom he has conferred favours. Next is the effect on the spectator of the lovely lines about the swallow, for he knows that this house, about which the friendly little creatures build, is a den of murder:

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This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here; no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,
The air is delicate.—*Macbeth*, act i. scene 6.

While the death-doomed king sits gaily at supper, desire and conscience fight a terrible battle in Macbeth's heart. The latter seems to have gained the victory, for he says to his wife, who, suspecting this, reproves him for leaving the supper-room, "We will proceed no further in this business." But this is not the fixed determination of the man, who, set upon the end, turns his back on the means; it is far rather the weakness of the ambitious climber who wishes to be persuaded to do the deed he knows must be accomplished. Lady Macbeth is unacquainted with hesitation, with weakness:

Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'
Like the poor cat i' the adage?—*Macbeth*, act i. scene 7.

After she has tried, with such bitter biting irony, to goad Macbeth out of his weakness and irresolution, she answers him, saying that "he can do all that may become a man," in words, which in their frightful power and grandeur, belong to the most magnificent ever written by any poet, ancient or modern:

What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;

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And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.—*Macbeth*, act i. scene 7.

When he mentions the possibility of failure, she changes her tone with diabolical skill. In the place of excited passion, comes the careful enumeration of the means by which such failure may be averted, all the reasonable precautions to be observed, in order that the deed may be accomplished without casting suspicion upon the real perpetrators. I call to witness all those who have ever beheld a really artistic and intelligent performance of the scene, to confirm my statement that the impression made upon the spectator is one of the most terrible and powerful which can be produced by a dramatic work. Night hangs over the castle. All its inhabitants, even the unsuspicious grey-haired king, lie wrapped in quiet slumber. Only the murderous pair are alert. In unhallowed, but different moods, they steal through the halls, wrapped in death-like stillness. Macbeth, although determined to do the deed that is to "murder sleep," is still in a state of inward perturbation. He experiences strange spectral illusions. The dagger with which he is to slay the unarmed slumbering old man floats before his excited vision; he thinks he sees blood drop from it. Lady Macbeth makes preparations for the murder with unmoved calm. She intoxicates the men who are to sleep in Duncan's chamber; nay, woman though she be, she would have done the deed from which her husband shrinks, "had he not resembled her father as he slept." This recollection reminds us that there survives even in this determined criminal a spot not yet quite hardened, that a bond still remains linking her to

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human tenderness. At the same moment in which she carries the murderous weapons with which her husband is to perform the deed into the chamber of the slumbering old man, the remembrance of her own father disarms her hand, though it does not shake her savage resolution. The pious thought of her father hinders her from the absolute act, but the wild passion of ambition is mighty within her. The gleam of the crown, which her fantasy adorns with glowing tints, and which she means at all hazards to set upon her haughty head, soon stills all gentler feeling, and when Macbeth, after completing the deed, returns to her in great excitement and agony of mind, she has recovered her former resolution. While he imagines that he hears terrible voices ringing through the castle, warning him that he who has murdered sleep shall therefore sleep no more, she remains unmoved. She takes, with cool prudence, all the precautions necessary to avert suspicion from herself and her husband. She has so completely overcome her tender impulses, that she is able to return to the chamber where the bloody corpse lies, to put the daggers which Macbeth brought away with him into the drunken servants' hands, smearing their faces with blood in order that the deed may be attributed to them. Macbeth in his fearful perturbation is incapable of doing this. He has utterly lost his self-possession. While remorse brings the wish to his lips that he could wake the sleeper to life once more, she pursues the deed coolly into all its consequences, and reminds her husband that he must preserve that outward tranquillity which is the only pledge of their safety and ultimate greatness. On the next morning, when, to the horror of all, the deed is discovered, she plays to perfection the part imposed upon her by her position. She feigns horror and pity with the skill of a practised actress, in so natural a manner, that no suspicion falls upon the couple. It rather falls upon the grooms who were sleeping in the king's chamber, who have been found under the influence of Lady Macbeth's drugged cup, still

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asleep, and whom Macbeth in feigned rage has killed to silence their tongues for ever. As the king's sons, fearing for their lives, have fled the castle, the suspicion of having hired the two servants to commit the murder is thrown upon them. Macbeth is elected king without opposition, and he and his wife are crowned. The brilliant goal is reached, the third and proudest prediction of the weird sisters fulfilled. One man only has a dim suspicion, Banquo, who was present when the prediction was uttered:

> Thou hast it now; king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
> As the weird women promised, and I fear,
> Thou play'dst most foully for't.—*Macbeth*, act iii. scene 1.

Macbeth must fear this suspicion, although Banquo makes no allusion to it, because Banquo was the only person, besides Lady Macbeth, who had any knowledge of the prophecy whose fulfilment was brought about by the bloody deed. Macbeth is also tormented by the remembrance that the weird sisters had also promised Banquo a glorious fortune, predicting for him the kingly power, not in his own person, but in that of his descendants, a long line of them. It is very characteristic, and shows Shakespeare's profound knowledge of the hidden depths and abysses of human nature, that the same man, who has become a criminal through his firm belief in the prediction of the witches, believes he can prevent the fulfilment of another prediction by a second crime. Banquo's death is resolved upon; his race must be destroyed; that the prophecy may come true, his only son, Fleance, must also perish. Thus quickly is fulfilled in Macbeth the curse which ever dogs the footsteps of crime. It is the very curse of evil deeds that they must still bring forth more deeds of evil. Macbeth is perfectly aware of this, and expresses it: "Who begins ill, strengthens himself in crime." But here his way parts from that of Lady Macbeth. Their characters, which stand in strong contrast to each other, portrayed in masterly

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manner by the poet, now enter into another phase of contradiction. They change parts to a certain extent. We see Lady Macbeth no longer in immediate connection with her husband's later crimes. She has no share in Banquo's assassination, nor in the subsequent senseless and horrible massacre of Macduff's family, although Lady Macduff's death plays a part in the confusion of intellect which follows the awakening of a conscience so long forcibly silenced. She knows, says Mrs. Jameson, how to commit a great crime to reach a great end, but not how to commit, deliberately, useless murders. At first she is only occupied in sustaining Macbeth's courage, and averting the dangerous consequences which might follow his frequent attacks of mental aberration in the presence of witnesses. He, however, goes on in the fatal path of crime. Banquo is the first victim. The escape of Fleance might have taught Macbeth, if he had not been blinded, that the struggle of men against the immutable decrees of fate is useless. But in spite of this, he allows himself to be once more ensnared by the mysterious and equivocal phrases and predictions of the witches, by the strange visitors called up by them, letting crime follow on crime, as though hoping thereby to force fate to remain constant. At last he wades in a perfect sea of blood, and rules his unhappy country with such frightful tyranny, that his subjects, rising in general rebellion, join themselves to the invading English army, and help to bring about its victory. In this dependence upon the tricks of the witches lies another difference between husband and wife. Certainly the first prophecy gives Lady Macbeth the impulse which leads to crime, but she is entirely free from superstitious fantasy. She has not been brought to her terrible resolution through belief in magic predictions. She will make her husband king, not because it has been predicted, but because her boundless ambition requires it. She only uses the influence the spectral interview had upon him, according to her profound

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knowledge of his character, to bring his wavering, irresolute temperament to the point. While, before Duncan's murder, she did everything she could to persuade him, he now goes on his grim progress alone; he has concealed his further plans of murder from his "dearest chuck." One might consider this caressing expression inappropriate to the fearful being to whom it is addressed, and in contradiction to Macbeth's former words, "Bring forth men children only, for thy undaunted mettle should compose nothing but males." But we have already observed how warm and tender is the love between this pair, who so often show themselves so hateful. It is just this which makes them endurable. Macbeth does not mean by this pet name that his wife is a gentle or tender being. He wishes only to keep his dear spouse from the knowledge of his crimes, that she may be as innocent as a dove. Soon the punishment of her deeds begins to overtake the guilty woman. Hardly is the aim attained, hardly does she wear the crown, than she ceases to care for it, and arrives at the bitter conviction that the dearly bought circlet brings no content:

> Nought's had, all's spent,
> Where our desire is got without content:
> 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
> Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.
>
> *Macbeth*, act iii. scene 2.

But though the inward strife begins, she maintains her defiant demeanour. No spirits "shake their gory locks" at her, as they do at Macbeth when his excited fancy calls up the phantom of Banquo, that nearly drives him mad. She tells him, in proud ardent words, that "these flaws and starts (impostors to true fear), would well become a woman's story by a winter fire," and must be resisted. She apprehends the suspicions that may be roused by the king's strange talk. She still has the energy to keep a calm demeanour before the guests, who are astounded at what happened, and to explain her husband's behaviour as a

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sudden attack of illness. Her spirit remains defiant, her strong will is unbroken. But even this criminal cannot escape the everlasting fundamental laws that rule mankind. While Macbeth, bewitched by incantations, proceeds from crime to crime, and thus provokes the tempest which breaks, in the form of the English army led across the border by Malcolm, the son of Duncan, aided by the rebellion arisen among his own subjects, her conscience is aroused to bitter suffering. This great moral retribution is revealed in a scene which gives a glimpse into the depths of hell, and is certainly one of the greatest ever created by any poet, of any period. Macbeth's cry of terror that "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more," is terribly fulfilled. She sleeps, but sleep brings her no refreshment, it only induces agony. Long has she compelled her powerful spirit, strung to a high pitch, to guard her terrible secret from the world's eyes. But at last this strength gives way, her unbending will is broken by a higher power. This woman who, even under fearful bodily torture, would never have allowed confession to pass her lips, is forced in the helplessness of slumber to lay bare her sins, her broken heart, her tormented brain. Her fearful mental sufferings drive her nightly from her couch; she wanders aimlessly about the castle. The phantoms she called weakness in Macbeth assume exclusive possession. She sees blood stains she cannot efface on her hands, let her wash and rub as she may. "What! will these hands ne'er be clean? Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." She deems it is the night of the murder, she hears the clock strike which calls her to commit the terrible deed, she taunts her husband with cowardice. She tells him "none can call their power to account." She shudders on beholding the blood streaming from the old man's body. Lady Macduff's bleeding apparition stands before her, although she was not an accomplice

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in this crime. Thus, in unspeakable torments, she roams through her castle, watched by one of her gentlewomen, and once also by the doctor. Such her retribution, such the bitter irony of avenging fate! The woman who had bent her powerful mind to hiding her frightful secret must betray it to strange ears. The crown was the glittering bait which lured her husband and herself into an abyss of blood and guilt, and now the humble waiting-woman looks down upon the crowned queen and thanks fate that she is not such a one. "I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body." Here again must be observed the contrast between Lady Macbeth's fearful end, and her husband's fate. In the first half of the tragedy, before, during, and after the murder, she appears the stronger, he the weaker personality, rendered capable of the deed only through her influence and mental energy. Now her strength and spirit are entirely broken. Macbeth, whose guilt is far greater, stands firm; he meets the blows of adverse fortune, which approach him from every side, with an iron front and unbending resolution. His conscience causes him no pangs; he no longer sees bloody spectres; his courage, his spirit, his strength of will remain unbroken until the moment of his fall. In this contrast lies a deep truth. Lady Macbeth has renounced her womanly nature; she has at the bidding of boundless ambition, trampled every milder and gentler feeling under foot. Such a sin against nature does not go unpunished. The weakness of woman, which is a great part of her charm, gives way under a burden which a man, though he may seem weaker, can easily bear. After infinite suffering of mind and soul, her body breaks down, and death frees her from pain, just as Macbeth is nearing his fall, for the ambiguous prophecy which promised him safety is shown to be a trick, and his overthrow looms inevitable before his eyes. A brief but moving phrase passes his lips when the news is brought of the death of the wife he loved so well: "She should have died hereafter.

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There would have been a time for such a word." In this tragedy occurs another example of such terrible brevity of speech, spoken in a moment of deepest grief and great excitement. When Macduff learns the news of his wife and children's murder, he only says, "He has no children." The poet who listened to all the secrets of man's heart knew that deep grief is speechless. Macbeth's fate is fulfilled; he falls under the avenging sword of Macduff, whose life he so cruelly devastated. The rightful heir to the throne is crowned. In *Romeo and Juliet* the holy and eternal thought of peace rises victoriously out of the grave of the innocent lovers. In *Macbeth*, steadfast and immortal justice, the immutable laws of mankind, stand over the grave of the guilty pair. They would realise their ambitious ends, in opposition to all rights of moral law, to humanity. The edifice of power raised on such foundations could but crumble to dust, and bury them beneath its ruins.

"HAMLET"

Ophelia—Gertrude

The sources whence Shakespeare drew the materials for *Hamlet* are a rude tale by Saxo-Grammaticus, a somewhat more carefully written version in the tales of Belleforest, and an English version called the "History of Hamblett." In these stories King Harvendill is slain by his brother Fengo, who ascends his throne and marries his widow. The feigned madness of Hamlet, son of the murdered king, and a riddle he propounds, apparently without reason, but in reality fraught with deep meaning, form the chief interest of the fable. The whole legend is very rough, entirely wanting in any eloquent passages, and this to a higher degree than is the case with any of the sources whence Shakespeare drew materials for his plays. He

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could use only few portions of the tale, such as the scene where Hamlet strives to awaken his mother's conscience, and the artifice by which he turns the order given to the ambassadors to their own destruction. It is therefore the more to be admired, that out of this rough material the poet should have created one of his profoundest and most intellectual works, a work that has given commentators so many enigmas to solve. Of these we cannot take account, as we are concerned only with Ophelia's character. In the original source Ophelia is a young girl who was brought, while a mere child, from quiet surroundings to a corrupt court, and is the queen's favourite lady in waiting. From this source Shakespeare drew one of those passages of keen psychological insight in which he is so rich. Gertrude, the queen, has degenerated in character, her propensities have made her an unfaithful wife and a murderess, but her heart is not yet altogether corrupt. With the whole strength of her remaining better nature she clings to the lovely being who possesses the purity and virtue she herself has lost. She rejoices in the thought of marrying her to her son; and when pitiless fortune draws the poor weak child into a whirlpool of inimical forces that destroy her, Gertrude weeps bitter tears over her grave and strews it with flowers. These tears are shed also for her own moral death, and the flowers adorn the grave in which her better self lies buried.

Mrs. Jameson, whom I have several times quoted, introduces her essay on Ophelia with some striking remarks. This clever authoress thinks that the strongest inclinations of women remain simply affections, so long as they are permitted to develop calmly, and without impediment; only when they meet with opposition do they become passions. The idea of love in Juliet and Helena (*All's Well that Ends Well*) is portrayed in its entirety, and with the most varied, glowing, and brilliant colours. In these two, love is real passion, an irresistible inward tide which sets the heart's blood in motion. As soon as

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it meets with opposition, it masters the will, and excites all the forces of the soul to a high degree, subduing them completely to its own ends. In Viola and Perdita love appears less tyrannical; it expresses itself more as a sentiment than as a passion; it is a mixture of inward attraction and imagination. But there is another form of feeling possible to feminine nature, and this Shakespeare has also shown us. He introduces us to two beings, in whom all the moral and intellectual strength they possess lies hidden and undeveloped, in whom love is only an unconscious attraction, and in whom the feminine character is depicted in its best attributes of innocence, modesty, amiability, and tenderness, for these are the eternal characteristics which nature bestows on women. They may be reversed by evil training; they may be overshadowed by evil fortune; they may be overpowered by passion; but they can never vanish absolutely from the heart of woman, so long as she is worthy of that name. Shakespeare has taught us how these fundamental female qualities, when it is permitted to woman to develop them under favourable conditions, suffice to form an ideal happy and fortunate creature such as Miranda. When, however, she is delivered into the grasp of rude and adverse fortune, amid the snares and corruptions of the world, without resisting power, without strength of will, without even a capacity to act for herself or to suffer to the end, such a nature must succumb to some tragic inevitable catastrophe, as Shakespeare shows us in Ophelia. Ophelia is perhaps the most touching character Shakespeare ever created. She seems too gentle, too lovely, too good, to be crushed beneath the blows of the pitiless fate she is too weak to resist, or to bleed under the thorns of a cruel world. She stands before us so gentle and pure, it seems as if a touch would pollute her. She appears consecrated by the deep bitter anguish. Her suffering calls for no words; we give her our tears; we turn away from her madness, averting our eyes in sorrowful pity. She appears at court like an angel surrounded by an

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atmosphere of heaven. When we hear her father and brother warn her, with worldly wisdom, against Hamlet and his vows of love,* we feel that it is too late. We foresee her destiny as soon as she is drawn into the struggle between crime and vengeance. Her helplessness touches us the more because it springs from her innocence, not from her weakness. Her feelings are strongly developed before she herself is strong enough to bear them. Love and terror combine to destroy her gentle existence. She speaks little, and her rare words hide rather than disclose the emotions of her heart; and yet we understand her character, and what is passing in her soul. We recognise her affinity to the dark-eyed, southern, ardent Juliet.† This dreamy blue-eyed child of the

* *Laer.* For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.
Oph. No more but so?
Laer. Think it no more.
. . . . . .
The chariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon;
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes;
The canker galls the infants of the spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Hamlet, act i. scene 3.

† The following passage shows that Ophelia had perhaps a knowledge of things of which one would think she would be ignorant. Her fancy, in spite of her purity and innocence, must sometimes have been occupied with forbidden things, as appears later on in the songs her madness calls to her lips unconsciously. The passage is as follows:

Oph. I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own rede.—*Hamlet*, act i. scene 3.

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north trembles before the passion about to engulf her; she believes herself more loved than loving, yet in her innocent heart love has taken deeper root than in that of him by whom she deems herself beloved. A whole world of love, pain, and despair lies in the short phrases of her dialogue with Hamlet. When he says, "I did love you once," she answered, "Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so." When he rejoins, "You should not have believed me; I loved you not," she breaks into the agonised cry, "I was the more deceived." The same spirit pervades her soliloquy, "And I, of ladies most deject and wretched, that sucked the honey of his music vows." She deems Hamlet to be mad. She hears the man to whom she has given her young heart, with all its secret hopes and wishes, load her with scorn and contempt. She finds herself wound about by a net of horrors. Her mind is hopelessly shaken, incurable insanity seizes her. This mental condition has been portrayed by Shakespeare with an accuracy which has astonished even physicians. Her imagination runs wild. Her speech is broken and interrupted. She passes from gaiety to grief and back to senseless gaiety. She, the innocent young girl, sings songs of doubtful meaning, which unconsciously betray the direction of her thoughts. She perishes, the spotless victim of a pitiless destiny.

"OTHELLO"

Desdemona

There are three women in Shakespeare's dramas who are drawn into tragic conflict by their husband's jealousy. One, Desdemona in *Othello*, perishes. The two others, Hermione in *A Winter's Tale* and Imogen in *Cymbeline*, are justified at last, but only after enduring great trials. It was evidently not by chance or by an arbitrary poetic invention that Desdemona is destroyed, while the other two, after long and bitter suffering, find safety and happiness.

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This difference in development arises naturally out of the difference of the natural dispositions and character the poet has deliberately given them, out of the different relation in which he places them to their husbands, and the different manner in which he makes each meet her fate. Desdemona's striking, touching, womanly figure, of whom Frederick Theodor Vischer says, "She is a truly saintly vision of inexhaustible tenderness," awakens in our hearts only a feeling of deep pity. Her love for Othello seems so unnatural that her father attributes it to magic; but, in spite of difference of age, race, character, and even colour, we understand that this love has sprung naturally out of the bias of her nature. Before the Senate, when Brabantio, Desdemona's father, accuses Othello of having bewitched his daughter by diabolical arts, so that, deceiving her father, and defying all prudence, propriety, and filial duty, she has privately married him, Othello, in simple straightforward words, gives an account of his love and wooing. This speech furnishes the best starting-point for an analysis and criticism of Desdemona's character:

Her father loved me; oft invited me;
Still question'd me the story of my life
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,
That I have pass'd.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
And portance in my travel's history;
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
It was my hint to speak,—such was the process;
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline:
But still the house affairs would draw her thence;

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Which ever as she could with haste despatch,
She'ld come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse: which I observing,
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
But not intentively: I did consent,
And often did beguile her of her tears,
When I did speak of some distressful stroke
That my youth suffer'd. My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd
That heaven had made her such a man: she thank'd me,
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story,
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake:
She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,
And I loved her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have used.—*Othello*, act i. scene 3.

We plainly see the young inexperienced girl, by nature shy and silent, who had shunned the attentions of the gallants of Venice, hanging absorbed upon Othello's lips, who, remarking her attention, appeals to her judgment, adorning his narrative, as we see by the mention he makes of strange and fabulous people, with the brilliant hues of imagination. His descriptions take her fancy prisoner. She is the more likely to be won by tales of adventure, as she has hitherto had no opportunity to exercise her imagination, and cannot withstand the influence of the world of wonder that breaks upon her mind. Admiration for his bravery, his renown as a hero, and above all the tender pity she feels for his wanderings and hardships, are the first vivid sentiments she has ever felt towards a man. She is so strongly moved that she so far forgets the modest reserve, meet to an innocent and carefully nurtured young lady, as to tell him that "if he had a friend who wished to win her favour, he could teach him how to woo her," thus almost offering her-

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self to him. She must have known perfectly well that her father would never consent to her marriage with Othello, still she was willing to deceive this loving and beloved father, and marry the Moor with a haste that rivals that of Juliet. But this haste springs from different motives in Desdemona and in Juliet. The love of Desdemona for Othello is not like Juliet's, the sudden result of a passion which has fallen upon her like a thunderbolt. It has arisen gradually, founded on admiration and pity. Therefore it is not sudden or overwhelming passion that is the source of Desdemona's important resolution. It is simply her complete artlessness and inexperience which makes her unable to judge the wide-reaching consequences of the inconsidered step she is taking, that led her to Othello's arms. These same qualities, and the effect they produce upon her behaviour, afterwards conduce to her husband's jealousy and her ultimate tragic end. Juliet, through her intimacy with her plebeian nurse, who had so little respect for maiden innocence, knows more of life and of things a young lady should ignore than Desdemona. Juliet perishes through the inevitable march of fate, diametrically opposed to her sudden and uncontrollable passion. Desdemona, on the contrary, knows nothing of the world. She perishes through pure ignorance. She resembles a bird which has left the nest before it can fly; swept away by the tempest, she perishes. The only fault of which she is guilty is the treachery practised against her father, but it is on this, and on the inferences drawn from it by villainy, that her frail bark is wrecked.

We must here make one remark regarding Othello's connection with Brabantio, Desdemona's father, in particular, and with the Venetian nobility in general, in order to comprehend how the diabolical Iago finds it so easy to instil by his calumnies the poison of jealousy into the Moor's unsuspecting mind, inflaming him with such rage that he destroys the beloved being with his own hand. Othello, in various expeditions and through many heroic deeds, has

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rendered immense services to the Republic of Venice. The omnipotent Senate has loaded him with honours, and trusts him absolutely. When war suddenly breaks out with Turkey, they send for him, and confer on him the chief command of the fleet despatched against the enemy. The individual nobles also treat him with friendliness. We hear how Senator Brabantio "oft invited him." Nevertheless there remained a deep impassable gulf between the Moor, the servant of the Republic, and the proud Venetian nobles. Brabantio never dreams of according to Othello his daughter's hand, as he himself declares, when, seeing that there is no hope of change, and hearing from his daughter herself that there is no truth in the accusation of magic against Othello, he exclaims, "Come hither, Moor! I here do give thee that with all my heart, which, but thou hast already, with all my heart I would keep from thee."

Othello was always aware of this, and of his inferiority of birth; and this consciousness, in spite of his bravery and heroism, which made him so terrible an adversary to the enemies of the Republic, awakens in him a kind of self-distrust, a sort of inward contradiction, that destroys the balance of his character. Now there comes to him this almost incredible happiness. He has won the hand and the love of the loveliest of the noble maidens, a member of the highest circle of the Venetian nobility. She, whom the elegant and cultivated youths of her own class left cold and unmoved, had given the Moor her heart, and, disregarding all prudence, had married him secretly. This restores his self-confidence and the lost balance of his mind. But this self-confidence, this restored balance of mind, rests exclusively upon his love, upon the assured possession of a being loved by him, upon his unshaken belief in her truth. Any doubt which should arise in his relations with her must throw him back into the old state of self-distrust and mental perturbation. He says himself when Iago first instils poison into his mind:

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> Excellent wretch! perdition catch my soul,
> But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
> Chaos is come again.—*Othello*, act iii. scene 3.

Hence the diabolically clever insinuation of Iago has the more effect when he calls Othello's attention to the fact that a woman who had been so false to her father would not be unlikely to betray her husband:

> She did deceive her father, marrying you;
> And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
> She loved them most.—*Othello*, act iii. scene 3.

The force of this strikes Othello the more because it recalls Brabantio's warning words:

> Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
> She has deceived her father, and may thee.
> *Othello*, act i. scene 3.

The actor who represents Othello, if he really enters into the spirit of his part, must start a little at these words. But in the first blush of married happiness, in the full possession of his renewed self-confidence, the Moor repels this suspicion as soon as it arises, and exclaims with conviction, "My life upon her faith!" Now, after Iago's remarks, he recalls these words, and the evil seed Iago has sown, with well-calculated cruelty and skill, sinks deep into his mind. The poison-plant that grows thence stifles all the nobler qualities of the man, and makes him a mere tool in the hands of the remorseless scoundrel. The old self-distrust awakes once more, increased by the contrast between the elegant and popular Cassio and himself, the rough soldier, belonging to a race regarded as inferior. This feeling is strengthened by Desdemona's imprudent behaviour, the consequence of her artlessness and inexperience. The evil influence pursues its terrible path, to the complete ruin of the ill-assorted married pair.

In making this explanation, which I hold necessary to the proper understanding of the drama, I have somewhat antici-

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pated its action. I now return to the earlier scene, which takes place on the night of the secret marriage, when the peaceful enjoyment of the lovers' bliss is violently disturbed by Othello's call before the Senate to take command of the expedition against the Turks. The noble qualities of the newly married couple appear in the brightest light. Othello does not hesitate a moment to sacrifice his personal interest to those of the state he serves. He is ready to leave his young beautiful wife on their wedding-day for the dangers of a warlike expedition. Desdemona's love for the husband she has chosen is expressed in eloquent and touching terms. Her affection will not permit her to return to her father's house during Othello's absence, even if he had not harshly refused to receive her. She "would not put him in impatient thoughts by being in his eye." Her loving heart tells her that her proper place is by her husband's side, whom she thinks it her duty, once she has given herself to him, to follow into war and danger:

> That I did love the Moor to live with him,
> My downright violence and storm of fortunes
> May trumpet to the world: my heart's subdued
> Even to the very quality of my lord:
> I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
> And to his honours and his valiant parts
> Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
> So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
> A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
> The rites for which I love him are bereft me,
> And I a heavy interim shall support
> By his dear absence. Let me go with him.
>
> *Othello*, act i. scene 3.

Othello supports her petition, and the Senate accedes it. They proceed to Cyprus in different vessels, as it was supposed that the Turks would attack that island. A terrible storm endangers their lives, but this same storm also destroys the Turkish fleet, and brings the war to an end without a blow. Desdemona reaches Cyprus in safety. Othello arrives soon after. His delight in the meeting is

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overpowering, and expressed in words so passionate and strong as to seem almost a defiance to envious fortune:

> It gives me wonder great as my content
> To see you here before me. O my soul's joy!
> If after every tempest come such calms,
> May the winds blow till they have waken'd death
> And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas
> Olympus-high, and duck again as low
> As hell's from heaven! If it were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy; for, I fear,
> My soul hath her content so absolute,
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate.
> *Des.* The heavens forbid
> But that our loves and comforts should increase,
> Even as our days do grow!
> *Oth.* Amen to that, sweet powers
> I cannot speak enough of this content;
> It stops me here; it is too much of joy.
>
> *Othello*, act ii. scene 1.

But the demon Iago stands in the background and says, "Oh, you are well tuned now; but I'll set down the pegs that make this music, as honest as I am." The devil keeps his word. This was the last peaceful and happy moment enjoyed by Othello and Desdemona. Iago begins his hellish task that same evening. He skilfully brings about Cassio's dismissal, advises him to request Desdemona's intercession with Othello, and then, with fiendish skill, inspires the latter with suspicion. Desdemona's artlessness and kindness of heart cause her to plead Cassio's cause with a zeal which Iago, with fiendish cunning, interprets in a way to feed Othello's jealousy, already fanned by hints and equivocal remarks, to a positive blaze of fury. Desdemona, in harmless unconsciousness, cannot conceive the possibility that Othello should be jealous. Consequently her proceedings are unintentionally imprudent. When the Moor asks for the handkerchief which Iago has contrived that he should see in Cassio's hands, instead of frankly confessing that she has lost it, she tries to turn

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Othello's attention from the subject, and falls back, of all unlucky topics, upon her old petition in favour of Cassio. The young creature has no worldly wisdom. She does not know that all breaches of social rule and custom avenge themselves severely upon women. The cruelty with which the credulous Othello spurns, maltreats, and abuses her arouses neither her anger nor her opposition. She remains gentle and patient, wondering what has so sadly changed her husband. She is so free from sin that she cannot conceive how any one should think her capable of guilt. She has absolutely no belief in the possibility of evil; she asks her chamber-woman if it be really true that there are women who deceive their husbands. When at last he hurls at her an insulting epithet, she is struck dumb, she can neither speak nor weep. Her gentleness, her patience, her resignation are inexhaustible. She prays God to forgive her slanderer, if there be such a person. In this dove there is no contradiction, not one drop of gall. She flutters in agony, until she falls dying to the ground. Before she lies down to sleep for the last time, she feels a sad premonition, which reminds her of the sorrowful willow-song. Only when her murderer awakes her from sleep does she recognise her terrible fate, and falls into a paroxsym of deadly terror. She expires under the hands of her blinded husband. Even when dying she finds strength to take upon herself the guilt of her own death. And this angelic spirit takes leave of earth with the infinitely touching words, which seem to reach us from an already blessed soul in heaven, "Commend me to my kind lord."

"KING LEAR"

Cordelia—Goneril—Regan

The legend of King Lear and his daughters is related by Godfrey of Monmouth, who avers that this monarch died

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about 800 years before Christ. Holinshed's Chronicle drew the story from this source. It had been treated in dramatic form before Shakespeare's time, in a piece dating before 1594, called, "A True Chronicle History of King Lear and his Three Daughters." The connection betwen this roughly constructed piece and Shakespeare's work is only traceable in a few passages. In this play the king questions his daughters as to the strength of their filial love, in order to play a trick upon the youngest, taking advantage of her protestations of obedience to marry her, against her will, to a King of Britain, who has proposed for her. Deceived in this expectation, he deprives her of her portion, and she marries the King of France, who has come to England disguised as a pilgrim, and has seen her by chance. Then Goneril, the eldest daughter, turns the poor old king out of her house, whereupon the two elder daughters hire a murderer to slay him and his faithful servant Perillus, the Kent of Shakespeare. They each entreat for the other's life, and are spared by the hired assassin. They flee into France, and meet the king and his wife Cordelia, who are taking a journey to the sea disguised as sailors. They espouse the cause of the old king, bring him back victorious to his own country, and defeat the wicked daughters and their husbands. From this brief outline it is evident that this older piece is wilder in form than Shakespeare's. This appears also from the trifling, almost childish grounds on which Goneril renounces her old father. She complains, among other things, that he always scolds when she has a new gown. He goes weeping to his second daughter, Regan, who receives him with hypocritical flattery, and immediately concocts his murder. Shakespeare has used these hints to construct on them a terrible and frightful picture of monstrous filial ingratitude towards a grey-headed and helpless father, who has sacrificed all to his children. He has also increased the horror of the material by coupling two plots in this tragedy, after a manner he so

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often affects. Beside the story of the ingratitude of Lear's daughters he places another family tragedy, wherein the crimes of a son against his kind father and noble brother are set forth. He borrowed from Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia" the catastrophe of the house of the Duke of Gloster, in which are presented the cunning designs, carried out with remorseless villainy, by an impious youth against his father and brother, and the extreme injustice of a deluded father against a son, as true and free from malice as Cordelia, whom the equally deluded Lear treats with like injustice. The poet weaves these two plots together with great skill, making the wicked bastard, Edmund of Gloster, the confidant and lover of the two dreadful sisters Goneril and Regan. For love of him Goneril attempts the life of her husband, and succeeds in taking her sister's life by poison, whence springs, in the end, the murder of Cordelia, taken prisoner in the battle with Lear. Shakespeare has given to these family quarrels a background of large political actions and intrigues. One of Lear's cruel daughters aims at enlarging the portion of the British realm which has fallen to her at the expense of the other, and if possible to bring the whole kingdom into one hand. At the same time the country is threatened with invasion by the King of France, who, together with his queen, Cordelia, wishes to avenge and restore King Lear. Many English nobles join the movement, which results in the cruel blinding of the Duke of Gloster, and in the murder of the Duke of Cornwall, who had aided the crime. The piece, if we except the doubtful *Titus Andronicus*, is more full of wild and gory deeds that any other Shakespearian play. Gervinus rightly remarked how the terrible character of these unnatural crimes is enhanced by the form in which they are set before us. The blinding of Gloster, the putting out of his eyes on the stage, is a scene in which tragedy is carried to the limits of the endurable, if not beyond them. It has also been remarked, that not only the manner of Cordelia's death,

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but her death itself is useless. An English ballad treating this argument, apparently of earlier date than Shakespeare's *Lear*, makes Cordelia die in battle. The effeminate public of the Restoration found the tragedy unendurable even in this milder form. The playwrights of that period leave both Cordelia and Lear alive, and give the whole play a more fortunate and satisfactory character. In this form, approved by many intelligent critics, it was often acted.

Cordelia, whom we see in the midst of this sea of blood and crime, and who, amid these wild passionate figures, appears like a pure spotless angel, is perhaps the most tender-hearted of all Shakespeare's women. It is difficult to grasp this character completely. Gervinus says: "The actress who cannot entirely forget the arts of comedy should never undertake this part. Mrs. Barry, who played it in Garrick's time, had beauty of a saintly type, full of gentle innocence and goodness, as little satirical as she was imperious. If an actress is not dowered with the highest and most versatile talent, it seems indispensable that she should be of such a physique, in order not to ruin the unassuming innocent and lovely Cordelia through stage mannerism." Her father says justly and beautifully, a short time before his death, of the daughter who lies dead in his arms, "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman." This voice was simply the expression of her soft, mild, and tender disposition. But one thing was wanting to her—not that this was really a fault—it was perhaps only another beauty of character, though it brings her into conflict with her obstinate old father. She is lacking in the skill requisite to express, in eloquent and flattering terms, the love she really feels. The will to do so is also wanting; she fears lest it should appear that she wishes to assure herself of a portion in her father's heritage by expressing her feelings. "Her heart is richer than her tongue." Her tender disposition, her modest shyness, shrinks from the notion of winning an

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inheritance by vaunting her filial affection in the presence of a large assembly. The king, however acute his judgment may have been in the days of his bravery and heroism, has lost it through old age. He interprets her timidity as obduracy, even as want of affection, and utters his mad sentence of forfeiture. We must examine the whole scene in order to place the characters of the three sisters in their proper light, as they here stand in that full contrast to each other which is further developed by the action of the tragedy. King Lear already shows plainly a weakness of intellect and judgment, in which we recognise the germ of that madness which afterwards breaks out under the frightful shocks that await him through the ingratitude of his two elder daughters. He has called together the principal men of his kingdom, his three daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia, the Dukes of Cornwall, Albany, and Burgundy, as well as the King of France, in order to declare to this solemn assembly his resolution:

> Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
> In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent
> To shake all cares and business from our age;
> Conferring them on younger strengths, while we,
> Unburthen'd, crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,
> And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
> We have this hour a constant will to publish
> Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
> May be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy
> Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
> Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
> And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,—
> Since now we will divest us, both of rule,
> Interest of territory, cares of state,—
> Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
> That we our largest bounty may extend
> Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,
> Our eldest-born, speak first.
>
> *Gon.* Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;
> Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty;
> Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
> No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
> As much as child e'er loved, or father found;

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A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.
Cor. (*aside.*) What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be silent.
King Lear, act i. scene 1.

The king grants Goneril and her husband, Albany, a fair third of his lands, and proceeds once more to put his silly question:

Lear. What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.
Reg. Sir, I am made
Of the self-same metal that my sister is,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short: that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys,
Which the most precious square of sense possesses;
And find I am alone felicitate
In your dear highness' love.
Cor. (*aside.*) Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so; since I am sure my love's
More richer than my tongue.—*King Lear*, act i. scene 1.

Lear confers upon Regan and her husband, the Duke of Cornwall, a second third of his possessions, and then turns to Cordelia:

Lear. Now, our joy,
Although the last, not least; to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interess'd; what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
Cor. Nothing, my lord.
Lear. Nothing!
Cor. Nothing.
Lear. Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.
Cor. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond; nor more nor less.
Lear. How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.
Cor. Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.

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Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.
Lear. But goes thy heart with this?
Cor. Ay, good my lord.
Lear. So young, and so untender?
Cor. So young, my lord, and true.
King Lear, act i. scene 1.

Now the obstinate old man robs her of her portion and adds it to that of her elder sisters, who have known so well how to speak. Nay, he even goes so far as to pronounce a terrible curse on his youngest child, who has been, as he said himself, the joy of his heart:

Lear. Let it be so: thy truth, then, be thy dower;
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist, and cease to be;
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and relieved,
As thou my sometime daughter.—*King Lear*, act i. scene 1.

I have given this curse textually in support of my remark that a seed of madness was already working in the king's mind. We must observe that Lear here curses the child he has heretofore openly preferred, simply because of her sincerity, which shrinks from flattering even her father, in order to obtain her portion, through what France, who rightly judges Cordelia's character, calls, "a tardiness in nature which often leaves the history unspoke that it intends to do," in almost the same words he uses against his elder daughters, when they have repaid his generosity with criminal

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ingratitude, and after they have ill-treated and insulted him in the most terrible manner. We are inclined to doubt whether the poet did not intend to represent the grey-headed old king as already no longer in full possession of his mind.

The selfish and narrow-minded Duke of Burgundy refuses Cordelia's hand when her father withdraws her ample dowry, and Cordelia takes leave of him with well-merited contempt: "Since that respects of fortune are his love, I shall not be his wife." The high-minded and noble King of France cannot understand:

> That she, that even but now was your best object,
> The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
> Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time
> Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
> So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence
> Must be of such unnatural degree,
> That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection
> Fall'n into taint: which to believe of her,
> Must be a faith that reason without miracle
> Could never plant in me.—*King Lear*, act i. scene 1.

These reasonable and sincere words of the King of France are a destructive criticism of Lear's insane proceeding. Cordelia assures him in touching words, which come straight from her heart, that she has done nothing terrible, and begs him to admit, at least, that he does not consider her guilty of crime:

> I yet beseech your majesty,—
> If for I want that glib and oily art,
> To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend,
> I'll do't before I speak,—that you make known
> It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
> No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
> That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;
> But even for want of that for which I am richer,
> A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
> As I am glad I have not, though not to have it
> Hath lost me in your liking.—*King Lear*, act i. scene 1.

Now the chivalrous King of France asks for the hand of this noble young lady, who has just been cast off by

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her father, in words which give a splendid testimony to her character:

> Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;
> Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised!
> Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:
> Be it lawful, I take up what's cast away.
> Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st neglect
> My love should kindle to inflamed respect.
> Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,
> Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:
> Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy
> Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.
> Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind:
> Thou losest here, a better where to find.
>
> *King Lear*, act i. scene i.

Evidently offended that the King of France should make his disinherited daughter a queen, Lear takes leave of her with the harsh words, "Begone, without our grace, our love, our benison," and departs, showing by his demonstrative graciousness to Burgundy that he is flattered by his refusal of his repudiated child. Cordelia, at her husband's request, bids adieu to her sisters:

> The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes
> Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are;
> And like a sister am most loath to call
> Your faults as they are named. Use well our father;
> To your professed bosoms I commit him:
> But yet, alas! stood I within his grace,
> I would prefer him to a better place.
> So farewell to you both.—*King Lear*, act i. scene i.

Hardly and bitterly the sisters answer:

> *Reg.* Prescribe not us our duties.
> *Gon.* Let your study
> Be to content your lord, who hath received you
> At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted,
> And well are worth the want that you have wanted.
>
> *King Lear*, act i. scene i.

The conversation between the sisters which follows Cordelia's departure shows how reasonable were her apprehensions. The wickedness of these hypocrites stands mani-

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fest, and gives us a foretaste of the old king's melancholy future when he shall be left to these cruel stony-hearted daughters. They remember not the benefits he has conferred, only his weaknesses, and consider precautions necessary to protect themselves against them. Lear soon experiences from Goneril, to whom he goes first with his hundred knights, the saddest disillusions. By order of his ungrateful daughter, his hundred knights, nay, he himself, are treated with coldness and unkindness. Under the excuse that they destroy the household quiet by their wild ways, she requires him to diminish the number of his escort, and treats the old man unmercifully. He now perceives too late that he has retained the demons and banished the angel of his life. Through these sufferings Lear's mind begins to give way, and the curse he invokes upon his ungrateful daughter is so frightful and unmeasured that it seems impossible to exceed it. Then he hastens to Regan, by whom he expects to be kindly and affectionately received in return for his generosity to her. He is bitterly undeceived. He meets instead with deadly insult, finding his disguised servant, Kent, placed in the stocks. He is not admitted, and the most trifling excuses are alleged for this. In the end, when the two sisters meet, they treat him with inhuman cruelty. The old man is shut out of the house, and forced to wander about the desolate moor, in bad weather, in storm and rain. In consequence his already shaken intellect entirely gives way, he becomes a victim to hopeless insanity. It is impossible to glance at the hearts of these women without shuddering. They seem to scoff at natural laws and the behests of duty. The poet may almost be accused of overstepping the limits of psychological possibility. These daughters are in the true sense of the word inhuman; they are created, not in the image of God, but in that of the devil. Unnatural children, they are also unfaithful wives. They do not shrink from the murder of a husband or a sister, to satisfy their sensuality

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or their ambition. No ray of light falls into the darkness of these corrupted souls. And now comes the contrast, heaven after hell. The mad old king is brought to Cordelia, who has arrived in England with the French army. Exhaustion, death-like slumber, has followed raving madness. At the first mention of the terrible treatment Lear received from his unnatural daughters, Cordelia shows deep distress. She does not remember the injustice with which she has been treated; she only remembers her love for him, his need of her. Tears, but not of anger, roll down her cheeks; her face looks like rain in sunshine; grief would be sought after as a treasure if it so adorned all.

> 'Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of 'Father'
> Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;
> Cried 'Sisters! sisters! Shame of ladies! sisters!
> Kent! father! sisters! What, 'i the storm? i' the night?
> Let pity not be believed!' There she shook
> The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
> And clamour moisten'd: then away she started
> To deal with grief alone.—*King Lear*, act iv. scene 3.

And now she waits in tears in deadly anxiety for his awaking. At last he opens his eyes; the lovely tear-bedewed face looks to him like a blessed spirit. When he recognises her he remembers what her sisters have done. "You have some cause," he says, "they have not." The whole angelic character of Cordelia lies in the two words with which she answers him, "No cause, no cause." The true loving child, who has been cast off by her father because she could not flatter him, has forgotten everything, or rather she does not judge her father. He is the sacred object of her love, her faithful care; to him pertains her duty, her affection, her whole being. Selfishness and immorality produce in her sisters characters from which we shrink with horror. In Cordelia Shakespeare shows us a pure, touching picture of an innocent soul, filled with high and tender womanhood, ennobled by filial love in its holiest

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expression. We should like to blame the poet for bringing this sweet lovely being to so sad an end. Cordelia and her father are taken prisoners in battle and slain in prison. What poet beside Shakespeare could give expression to a father's grief at the loss of such a child in words like Lear's?

> Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:
> Had I your tongues and eyes, I'ld use them so
> That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!

The old man, who, through the kind offices of his angelic daughter, has recovered his senses and his former strength, so that he killed the slave who killed Cordelia, has, now that his child is gone, lost all sense of what goes on about him. Life has nothing more to give him. He has endured every sorrow that can afflict humanity. Cordelia appeared to him as an angel of deliverance, who upraised him, purifying and consoling. Through her love, after all his woe, he enjoyed a brief term of happiness. Was it unjustly cruel of the poet to suffer this lovely being to perish? Schlegel has given the right answer to this question. "It is absurd to make a double ending to a tragedy, a sad one for hard-hearted spectators, and a happy one for souls of weaker mould." The figure of Cordelia passes away in a manner worthy of her, since she seals her filial love with the highest sacrifice, that of her life. Any attempt to bring about this end within the limits of poetical justice would have been a mistake.

DRAMAS

"MEASURE FOR MEASURE"

Isabella

The drama *Measure for Measure* was first represented in 1604. It was apparently suggested by an Italian tale in Geraldi Cinthio's "Helnatomiti," which Whetstone translated in his "Heptameron of Civil Discourses." The

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argument is rough and repulsive. Juriste, the Imperial Stadtholder of Innsbruck, in the absence of the Duke, has condemned a young man to death for a crime similar to that committed by Claudio in *Measure for Measure*, and seduces Ekitia, the young man's sister, who interceded for his life, through the double promise of marriage and pardon for her brother. This brother he afterwards causes to be put to death, sending his corpse to his sister's house. The Emperor decrees that Juriste shall marry Ekitia, and be executed after; but, in response to Ekitia's pleading, he is pardoned and remains her husband. Whetstone employed the same theme in his ten-act play of *Promos and Cassandra*, though he somewhat softened the ugliness of the subject. The brother is not executed; the jailor releases him, and bears to the sister the head of another prisoner; all else is the same as in the tale. Shakespeare has softened the plot yet more. The head is borne, not to the sister, but to the judge. Isabella's fall is averted by Angelo's former betrothed, and thus the most repulsive portion, the marriage of the sister with the murderer, at least the judicial murderer, of the brother, is averted. But even so the plot remains ugly enough, and repels many of Shakespeare's warmest admirers. One of these, Coleridge, designates the play as the only unpleasant thing written by the poet. Nevertheless even here we can still find matter for admiration in the profound art of the author in dealing with characters and motives. The scene of action is Vienna, a city given over to great immorality, and where vice had become universal. An old law punished these vices severely, but for fourteen years it had fallen into disuse, through too great indulgence and good-nature on the part of the Duke. At last, however, he is dismayed as he sees vice everywhere triumphant, and growing aware that he is not severe enough to enforce the law, he absents himself for a while, and leaves a substitute in charge. For this post he chooses Angelo, who enjoys an unspotted reputation,

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and is regarded as a model of virtue. But his virtue is rather apparent than real, as we gather from his earlier history, with which the Duke was acquainted. He was betrothed to Mariana, the sister of the naval hero, Frederick. When her brother's ship foundered, carrying down with it her dowry, he deserted her. The Duke, desirous to put Angelo to the proof, chooses him as his substitute, a position indicated by his moderation and influence in the city. He announces that he is going away on a journey, but instead remains in the town disguised as a monk, and carefully observes all that goes on. Angelo enforces the Draconic law with the utmost severity. All irregular houses are pulled down, the prisons overflow. A young nobleman, Claudio, is arrested on account of a single dereliction. It is proposed to make an example of him. Claudio was betrothed to Julietta, a friend of his sister, and as the marriage was postponed on account of money troubles, they contracted a secret alliance. This union did not remain without consequences. On this account Claudio is to be punished with death. With the help of a friend, Claudio entreats his young and beautiful sister, Isabella, to plead with Angelo for his pardon. She possesses many gifts, prudence, intellect, and beauty, but her intention is to bury all these charms in a cloister. When she hears of her brother's misfortune, she is severe and impartial enough to refrain from pronouncing the law unjust, but her virtue is not superhuman. She recognises his faults, but she does not consider that pardon would be a fault. She seeks audience of the Governor. In her chaste soul a fierce conflict wages; the need to condemn the sin and pity for the sinner are at strife within her. She seeks mercy for her brother; she seems to entreat in one breath judgment for the sin and pity for the sinner. She does not seek to win her cause by eloquence; she is in no mood to parade her intellect or her wit; at the first negative reply she abandons all hope for her brother's life and prepares to depart. The

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reproaches of her brother's friend cause her to renew her suit. She continues to recognise the justice of the law, but also to perceive no obstacle to the exercise of mercy. She once more urges her cause with feeling and sincerity, she overcomes her maiden timidity, is frank and natural, her noble heart unfolds itself more and more. Angelo feels that he is moved, and, afraid of the power she might exercise over him, begs her to depart. She bids him remember the true righteousness which procured grace and pardon for sinful men; but he again refuses to grant her request. When she sees that nothing can be done with the representative of the government, she addresses herself to the human being. "So must you be the first," she says, "that gives this sentence, and he the first who suffers. Oh, it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant." She gives full play to her eloquence. She appeals with ever-fresh insistence to the inmost secrets of his being. She had reminded him concerning the right use of his official powers, and now makes appeals to his virtue. "We cannot weigh our brother with ourself," she says, and "bids him go to his bosom and knock there, and ask his heart what it doth know that's like her brother's fault." She exposes the deepest secrets of his being, and reveals to him how much in his attitude is pure hypocrisy. Nevertheless he still remains master of himself; he bids her go, although he adds, "Come again to-morrow." Thus he enters on the path of error. "Hark," she says, "how I'll bribe you." "Bribe me!" he answers. "Ay," she rejoins, "with such gifts that heaven shall share with you. Not with fond shekels of the tested gold—but with true prayers, prayers from preserved souls, from fasting maids, whose minds are dedicated to nothing temporal." It is not our task to follow the working of Angelo's mind, which ultimately causes him to conceive the design of proposing that Isabella should ransom her brother's life with her honour, for it is only with the female characters that we are concerned. She visits him often, and

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when he tells her that her brother is to die, is about to quit him instantly. He retains her. She divines his purpose from a question he puts, but she believes that he does it only to test her. She answers in a manner which leaves him in doubt whether innocence or cunning inspires her speech. When, however, she perceives that he is in deadly earnest, she exclaims, "Better it were a brother died at once, than that a sister by redeeming him should die for ever." After an agitated colloquy, she declares that unless he signs a present pardon for her brother, she will unmask him to the world. He answers that his unsoiled name, the austerity of his life, will so her accusation overweigh that she will stifle in her own report and smell of calumny. He remains firm in his proposal; either she must be his, or her brother must die. He gives her until the morrow to decide and leaves her. Her soliloquy reveals her noble confidence in her brother, believing that he will surely prefer death to a sister's shame. In this, however, she deceives herself. When she informs him of the shameful dilemma in which Angelo has placed her, and her conviction that he will sooner surrender his life than buy it at such a price, he answers her, "It is a fearful thing to die;" and begs her to consent to Angelo's desires. In stern words she reproaches him with the dishonourable request, rejects him, and is about to leave him in deep displeasure. It is now that the Duke, disguised as monk, comes on the scene, and asks to speak with the brother and sister. He tells Claudio that Angelo's proposal was only to test Isabella, that there is no hope for him, that he must prepare to die. He then narrates to Isabella the story of Marianna, who remains faithful to the faithless Angelo. Isabella is apparently to accede to Angelo's proposal, stipulating, however, that she is not to remain long, and that the place of meeting may be enclosed in shadow and silence. Marianna is then to go to Angelo in her stead, and he, when he shall afterwards discover the truth, will be forced to conclude the marriage he has

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already promised her. This project, for many reasons, appeals to the noble-minded Isabella. She is resolved not to buy her brother's life at the price of her own honour, but she perceives that this is a means by which she can save both her honour and his life. It would be contemptible if she should sacrifice the honour of another to the attainment of her end, but by the means proposed this other is helped to re-establish her own position, lost through Angelo's infidelity. Nevertheless, according to our view, this sophistry is repulsive, and this play, as well as *All's Well that Ends Well*, in which the same situation occurs, is very seldom represented on the stage. Marianna consents, and the action proceeds as planned. Angelo is deceived, he believes that he has sullied Isabella's innocence, and fearing Claudio's vengeance, issues orders that he be beheaded the following day. But he is deceived once more; the head of another man is sent instead. How he is unmasked by the reappearance of the Duke, and compelled to marry Marianna, it is not our province to relate. The characters of this play, by no means a favourite with the present writer, exhibit sharp contrasts. Angelo, with his hypocritical severity, is opposed to the Duke's excessive indulgence; his reserve is placed in a fierce light as compared to the viciousness of Claudio; whose heartlessness again is contrasted with the warm-hearted weakness of the faithful Marianna, his frenzied regard for outward appearance with Lucio's indifference to his bad reputation. Among these extreme contrasts Isabella stands alone, a gracious complete human figure, who knows that all that is external is but fragmentary; that moderation and prudence are akin to weakness and timidity; that only strong moral principle makes a true man, protecting him from vacillation and error, and leading him to the highest development of which a human being is capable.

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"WINTER'S TALE"

Hermione—Perdita

Very differently from Desdemona does Hermione in *Winter's Tale* meet her fate. She is a queen, a matron, a mother. In her demeanour, in every word, there breathes a majestic spirit, a noble and admirable self-control. Already the manner in which each responds to her husband's wooing presents a striking contrast. Hermione answered the ceremonious proposal of Leontes, like herself of royal birth, only after a three months' delay. Desdemona, on the contrary, almost offered herself to Othello, and, although the relations in this union seem unnatural, she deceives her father and marries him clandestinely. Leontes' jealousy is not aroused by the evil insinuations of another, like that of Othello. In him it is a natural failing. He is jealous already at the beginning of the play, and watches with suspicious glances the amiable and friendly demeanour of his wife towards his friend Polixenes, king of Bohemia, for several months guest at the Sicilian court. His suspicion becomes certainty when his friend, after refusing to prolong his stay at Leontes' urgent request, consents to remain at the request of Hermione, whose husband has bid her ask him. The fatal passion takes possession of his whole nature; it robs him of clearness of understanding, makes him deaf to all the pleadings of faithful Camillo, and causes everything to appear to him as false and insincere. The mad visions of his blinded brain alone seem to him true and real. His heated imagination causes him to suspect, besides the crime of unfaithfulness, a design against his life. In his blind fury he forgets the sacred duties of hospitality and charges Camillo to murder Polixenes. Camillo promises obedience. To gain time, he reveals to the threatened King of Bohemia his danger, and flies with him from the country. The

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news of their flight only increases the king's delusions. Enraged, he rushes into Hermione's apartment. She, ignorant of the gathering storm, is sitting among her women, listening to the prattle of her promising and precocious little son, Mamillius. She receives the first hint of her husband's suspicions with incredulous astonishment; not like Desdemona, who could not understand, but because she will not. She replies to his categorical accusations with calm dignity. This calmness never forsakes her, but it leaves a high-minded impression rather than one of coldness or pride. It reflects the steadfastness of a strong, noble heart, entirely conscious of its innocence. Very striking is her quiet answer to Leontes' raging abuse; admirable the calm dignity with which she receives the order given by the furious king that she be led to prison. She requests that her women may remain with her, as she will have need of them at her approaching confinement. We feel that feminine tears and lamentations do not accord with this character. In gaol is born the unfortunate child, given up by its deluded father to a cruel fate, although the true and noble, but imprudently rude, Paulina speaks out boldly to the king on its behalf. The only concession she obtains is that, instead of being slain immediately, the poor little infant is to be carried by Paulina's husband, Antigonus, into a foreign land, and there exposed in a desolate place. Brought before the tribunal, and ordered to defend herself, Hermione feels to the full the shame of her position, but her high spirit is undaunted. She defends herself eloquently and gravely, in the full consciousness of her innocence, as Desdemona could never have done. She speaks not with anger or bitterness, but like a queen, who defends her children's honour in her own. Her last appeal is to the oracle of Apollo. This is consulted with great solemnity, and fully exonerates Hermione. But still the king is not cured of his delusion. With insolent defiance he pronounces the oracle to be false. A servant now brings the news of the

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sudden death of his fine little boy, and Hermione is carried out in a deathlike swoon. Now at last repentance takes hold of Leontes. He recognises the full extent of his crime, and the fury of remorse gnaws at his heart. Paulina enters, and announces the queen's death. Even she is moved by the king's grief, and promises never again to mention Hermione or her children; nor will she even reproach him with the loss of her husband, who has never returned from the fatal voyage undertaken with the unfortunate baby. For sixteen years Hermione allows her husband and the world to believe her dead, returning only when her daughter, who also was deemed dead, had been found; then in the famous statue-scene she returns to her repentant husband. This deception has been called unfeeling and unnatural in a virtuous wife. The reproach is unfounded. Hermione's husband, with base suspicion, doubted her fidelity and risked her reputation. She had been openly stigmatised, her innocent little daughter exposed to a fearful death, her promising young son slain through her disgrace. For such injury and such suffering her late acquittal is too slight an atonement. Her husband's momentary remorse is not enough to win back his lost place in her heart. Must the high-spirited woman re-enter in royal state the same court that beheld her humiliation, saw her childless, widowed in heart through the unworthiness of her spouse, a perpetual reproach, a perpetual accusation to him? That would have shown a want of natural feeling. There was nothing left for her to do but, wounded as she was in heart and soul, to retire from the world, not to brood over her injuries, but to learn to forgive, and to allow her husband time once more to become worthy of her through long repentance.

Perdita, the unhappy child, unmercifully doomed by her father to a most cruel death, is rescued through a fortunate chance. While Antigonus, charged to expose the infant, falls a victim to his errand, being devoured by wild beasts, the little girl is saved and adopted by shepherds.

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The foundling brought luck and prosperity to the lowly hut that sheltered her, for a large sum of money was found sewn into her pillow. The shepherd-folk tenderly nourished the child who brought them prosperity. She grew up a lovely and lovable creature, who spread sunshine about her and won the hearts of all she met. Florizel, the son of the very King of Bohemia who was forced to flee from Leontes' vindictive and senseless jealousy, met her while out hunting, and was unable to resist her charms. A tender bond of love unites the two young hearts. Touching are the remonstrances of the lovely girl, from whom her lover has not concealed his high position. She fears lest his father should insist on breaking the bond which binds the heir to his throne, to a maiden so humble as herself. Full of manly resolution is the Prince's answer that, in spite of his father's possible opposition, he would never forsake her:

> For I cannot be
> Mine own, nor anything to any, if
> I be not thine. To this I am most constant,
> Though destiny say no.—*Winter's Tale*, act iv. scene 4.

Destiny says "No!" Old King Polixenes, who has heard of the love-affair between his son and heir and the shepherd's daughter, attends in disguise, together with Camillo, the sheep-shearing feast held by the shepherds. Although charmed by the young girl's beauty, the amiability with which she receives and greets the guests, yet, when Florizel wishes to proceed to a formal betrothal, he discloses himself, and speaks, in great anger, first to his son:

> Mark your divorce, young sir,
> Whom son I dare not call; thou art too base
> To be acknowledged: thou a sceptre's heir,
> That thus affect'st a sheep-hook!—*Winter's Tale*, act iv. scene 4.

Then to the supposed father of Perdita:

> Thou old traitor,
> I am sorry that by hanging thee I can but
> Shorten thy life one week.—*Winter's Tale*, act iv. scene 4.

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Then follow severe and cruel words addressed to the maiden, which I quote because the way in which Perdita receives this abuse shows clearly the loveliness of her nature:

> And thou, fresh piece
> Of excellent witchcraft, who of force must know
> The royal fool thou copest with,
> I'll have thy beauty scratch'd with briers, and made
> More homely than thy state.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And you, enchantment,—
> Worthy enough a herdsman; yea, him too,
> That makes himself, but for our honour therein,
> Unworthy thee,—if ever henceforth thou
> These rural latches to his entrance open,
> Or hoop his body more with thy embraces,
> I will devise a death as cruel for thee
> As thou art tender to't.—*Winter's Tale*, act iv. scene 4.

Perdita, who has long foreseen this moment, but has consoled herself during his contemptuous speech with the thought that a kind Creator cares for all His creatures, let them be high or low, says to the prince, who has remained behind after his angry father has departed:

> Even here undone!
> I was not much afeard; for once or twice
> I was about to speak and tell him plainly,
> The selfsame sun that shines upon his court
> Hides not his visage from our cottage but
> Looks on alike. Will't please you, sir, be gone?
> I told you what would come of this: beseech you,
> Of your own state take care: this dream of mine,—
> Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
> But milk my ewes and weep.—*Winter's Tale*, act iv. scene 4.

Florizel's steadfast and touching fidelity and his passionate entreaties at last induces the lovely being to risk all to save her own happiness and that of her beloved. By Camillo's advice, who thus hopes to return to his country, they take refuge at the court of Leontes. Perdita's foster-father also flies with his sons to escape the wrath of Polixenes, and takes with him the bundle containing the things found

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with the child, which are the proofs of Perdita's birth. Leontes receives the fugitives graciously, even before he knows Perdita to be his daughter. He is glad to make amends to Florizel for the wrongs done in his blind rage to Polixenes, the father. The charming young girl too wins his heart as by magic, and, with astonishment, he discovers in her the child whom, in his passion, he sent away. King Polixenes, who has hurried in fierce displeasure after the fugitives, is, naturally, now quite willing to consent to his son's marriage. But Leontes awakens to sharp remorse, and a strong longing seizes him to behold his innocent wife. The time has come for Paulina to speak, for now Leontes has become worthy of his noble spouse. She returns, in the wonderful statue-scene, as though she had arisen from the grave, to enjoy pure and unalloyed happiness after frightful trials, beside her repentant husband and her newly discovered daughter, whom she clasps in her arms with transport.

To this description of the female characters in the *Winter's Tale* I wish to add a few remarks to those already made in reference to several of Shakespeare's dramas, but which are more appropriately linked to an examination of the *Winter's Tale*, because the peculiarities of his work with which they deal are most prominent here. Shakespeare has been accused of dealing in rough and inartistic mode with time and place, of committing, through ignorance or inattention, the most intolerable historical anachronisms and geographical impossibilities. The *Winter's Tale* seems especially open to such criticisms. The piece embraces events that cover a period of twenty years; the lovely being who is the protagonist of the second part is not yet born in the first scene. Historical personages and circumstances of divers epochs are confused in most unaccountable fashion. Hermione is called the daughter of the great Emperor of Russia; the king makes a solemn application to the Delphic oracle;

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the celebrated Italian Giulio Romano painted Hermione's portrait. No less wonderful is Shakespeare's geography in the *Winter's Tale.* Bohemia is a country on the sea-coast whence Sicily can be reached by water. It cannot be supposed that ignorance was the source of these historical and geographical blunders, or that Shakespeare really was not aware that he was mixing up time and place in such a manner. This hypothesis does not agree with the deep, nay, astonishing knowledge and insight he shows in dealing with such subjects and their relations in other plays, which have even given rise to the supposition, that he made a special study of such branches of knowledge. Nor does it agree with the truth and profundity with which he seized and portrayed the history of ancient Rome, so far removed in time and aspect from his own. Witness too the historical accuracy with which he depicted the rise of the Roman world, from the period of the Republic, with its patricians and plebeians, to its complete decadence, and the inevitable despotism which followed. Shakespeare—albeit certain writers have called him so—was no rough and uncultivated savage, who now and then emitted flashes of genius, but at other times was wilfully capable of coarse and inartistic contradictions. We have before remarked that these aberrations usually occur in plays which entirely belong to the realm of pure fantasy, and that the poet has shown in many passages a deep and extended knowledge of the higher spheres of human life and science. Hence such an accusation must go for nothing. Above all things, moreover, and this is the important point, there is one branch in which, in spite of all the liberties he takes with outward circumstances, he is always true and accurate. One thing is evident in all his works—the truth of his character-drawing. The persons he sets before us may be said, in his own words, to hold the mirror up to nature. This truth, this presentation of character in harmony with nature, is the mark of a great poet. Before this all other drawbacks and faults entirely disappear.

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"CYMBELINE"

Imogen

In *Cymbeline*, as in many of his other dramas, Shakespeare has woven together two plots, one dealing with the fortunes of Cymbeline's daughter Imogen, and the other with the abduction of his two sons by the vengeful Belarius. The whole play has a background of vast political action in the struggle of Britain with the Roman Empire. Even the genius of Shakespeare did not suffice to weld these different actions, each of which would have furnished material for a play, into a harmonious whole. The threads interweave in so intricate a manner that clearness and unity are often lost. But the central point of this work, which is certainly faulty in form and composition, is one of the loveliest, most fascinating female figures the poet ever created. Before bringing the full beauty of this exquisite woman before the reader, and pointing out its perfections, we must glance at the source whence Shakespeare drew the material for the different actions of his drama. For here, also, Shakespeare has not invented the fable, but has, as usual, borrowed the foundations from foreign sources, and only built on them, in masterly manner, a work of art, although, if the work be looked at as a whole, not with his usual success. The material for Imogen's principal adventure is borrowed from the ninth tale of the second day of the "Decameron" of Boccaccio, in which the events move in a different and lower sphere. The outline is as follows:—

A company of Italian merchants are talking in a tavern in Paris about their wives. They all speak in light and doubtful manner of woman's virtue; only the young Genoese, Bernabo, declares that by the special grace of Heaven he possesses a wife whose chastity is equal to her beauty. Excited by copious potations, and by the taunts of another

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merchant, named Ambrogiolo, Bernabo continues to praise the virtues, charms, and talents of his wife. He lauds her amiability, her humility, her modesty, her skill in all woman's work, her agreeable and polite demeanour, in which she equals the most carefully trained court page. She is also, he declares, the best rider among ladies, can fly a hawk as well as the most skilful huntsman, and can also read and write and cipher as well as any man there present. His enthusiasm only arouses the laughter and mockery of his companions, especially of Ambrogiolo, who, through skilful insinuations and contradictions, arouses Bernabo to such a pitch of excitement, that at last he passionately declares that he will wager his life and head on his wife's virtue. This leads to the wager which plays so important a part in the drama. Ambrogiolo bets 5000 golden ducats against 1000 that Zinevra is vulnerable like all other women, and that he will conquer her virtue in less than three months, and bring her husband incontrovertible proofs of her infidelity. He goes to Genoa to carry out his plan, but, on his arrival, all that he hears from others, and sees with his own eyes, of the virtuous and noble disposition of Bernabo's wife, makes him doubtful of the success of his enterprise. He, therefore, resorts to a trick, by which he hopes to win the wager through feigned success. A servant of Zinevra's is bribed to get him carried in a chest into her mistress's room. Creeping out in the middle of the night, he takes note of the furniture and the objects in the room. He purloins her purse, her dressing-gown, and her girdle, and glances at her body. With these proofs he returns to Paris and convinces the unhappy husband of Zinevra's infidelity. Bernabo rejects every proof until Ambrogiolo mentions a mole cinque spotted on her breast. These words are like a dagger thrust into his bosom; he pays the sum wagered without hesitation, and returns to Genoa in despair at the falsehood of his wife he so thoroughly trusted, and raging at the loss of his money. Arriving at Genoa, he betakes himself to a country-house, and sends a message to

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Zinevra to bid her come thither to him. He gives, however, secret orders to the man to murder her on the way from the city. The servant, when about to carry out his master's command, is overcome by her entreaties and the promptings of his own conscience, and spares her life on condition that she leaves the place for ever. He then gives her his own hat and mantle as a disguise, and brings his master the news that he has slain her, and that her body has been devoured by wolves. Disguised as a sailor, Zinevra goes on board a ship sailing for Alexandria, and is there taken into the service of the Sultan of Egypt under the name of Sicurano. She wins the favour of her lord, who, having no idea that his favourite is of the female sex, sends her to Acre as captain of the guard which is to act as convoy to the merchants. Here she meets, by chance, Ambrogiolo, and sees in his possession her purse and girdle, which she recognises. In answer to her question how he came by them, he tells her with malignant delight how he obtained these things. She persuades him to return with her to Alexandria, whence she sends, in the Sultan's name, a message to her husband bidding him come to Alexandria. As soon as a fitting opportunity occurs, she cites them both before the Sultan, forces Ambrogiolo to confess his rascally trick, and compels her husband to acknowledge that he ordered the murder of his wife. She then throws herself at the Sultan's feet, and reveals her sex and name. At his wife's entreaty Bernabo is spared. Ambrogiolo, however, is condemned to be bound to a post, smeared with honey, and so left to be the prey of grasshoppers and other insects. This frightful sentence is executed, while Zinevra, enriched by the Sultan's gifts and the confiscated property of Ambrogiolo, returns to Genoa with her husband. Here she lives in great honour and happiness, and preserves her reputation for chastity and virtue unstained to the end of her days. It is easy to see by this slight comparison of the source with the drama, and of Zinevra with Shakespeare's Imogen,

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that the latter is more indebted to the poet and his power of creative genius than to the model whence he worked. Shakespeare combined the fable of this tale, of which an English version existed before his time, with two other actions out of which he has compounded his *Cymbeline* in the following manner. He makes the slandered wife the daughter of Cymbeline, who married, of her own free will, the adopted son of the king, although her hand was promised by her father and stepmother to Gloten, the son of the latter. As to the struggle for tribute and the war between Rome and Britain, Shakespeare drew the foundation from Holinshed's Chronicle. For the third action, the abduction of Cymbeline's sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, by the vindictive Belarius, no foreign source is discoverable. It was therefore probably Shakespeare's own invention. The examination of the contents of the piece, which is necessary if we would place the central female figure in its proper light, starts from the abduction of her brothers. Belarius had claims upon the king for valuable services rendered in war. The king had, however, lent an ear to wicked slanderers who accused Belarius of treasonable understanding with the Romans. Hence he had banished him, confiscating his property. To avenge himself, Belarius stole the king's two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus, and brought them up in a mountain cave. In the solitude of the wilderness, however, mild and hallowed thoughts overcame the fierce warrior, prompting him to atone for the crime he had committed through revenge, by bringing up the two kidnapped princes as brave and virtuous men. Far from the temptations of ambition, thirst for fame, and avarice, they grew up amid the scenes of nature, in the same innocence and nobility which their sister Imogen had, through her matchless purity, preserved through all the temptations of a court. The boys, now grown up to be young men, are mirrors of purity and truth, they know no unlawful thoughts, no passionate or immoral desires. But the blood of their royal

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forefathers stirs in their veins. They feel that the lonely forest grows too narrow. The chase after animals, that flee unresistingly before them, no longer contents them; they long for combat with noble, with equal foemen. Belarius describes them in the words: "They are as gentle as zephyrs blowing beneath the violet, not wagging his sweet head; and yet as rough, their royal blood enchafed, as the rudest wind that by the top doth take the mountain pine, and make him stoop to the vale." So they demean themselves to their unknown sister, when, in the guise of a gentle, helpless boy, she comes, by strange chance, to their dwelling. The bitter grief they experience when they suppose their beloved companion dead, is expressed in heartfelt, moving words. But when the battle between the Roman army and that of the king their father takes place near by, they rush with fierce, wild bravery into the fray, and in company with their old foster-father turn the fate of the day in favour of the Britons by their irresistible valour. We have explained these circumstances in detail in order to put forward the following considerations. The abduction of the princes occurs at a time far anterior to the opening of the play. They are only cursorily mentioned in the first scene, by one of the gentlemen, in the following phrase:

> That a king's children should be so conveyed,
> So slackily guarded; and the search so slow,
> That could not trace them!

and they are obliged to acknowledge that, strange as it sounds, this is the truth. Everything was possible in such a corrupt court. The two gentlemen were discussing a very recent event, which had just greatly excited the whole court, and which could never have happened in a safe, well-ordered *milieu*, ruled by a strong hand. Imogen, the heiress-apparent, the destined bride of the only son of the king's second wife, had chosen a husband for herself, and secretly married Leonatus, called Posthumus, because he was born after his

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father's death. He was the son of Sicilius, a general in the service of Cymbeline's father, and had been brought up by Cymbeline, together with his daughter Imogen. He is banished, his wife imprisoned. Let us examine this court more closely. Its head is King Cymbeline, a very weak man, though by nature kind-hearted. But just through his weakness, and his consciousness of this defect, he is irritable, fond to excess of his own way, while entirely under the dominion of his wicked, false, malignant wife. She poisons his mind against the only two superior beings at the court, his daughter Imogen and his foster son Leonatus. She influences him in favour of her son Cloten, a most repulsive being. Not a single person at the court has a good word to say for this wretch. Indeed, the courtiers really take the part of Imogen and Leonatus, though outwardly they dissemble. The critic is forced to say of Imogen what the enamoured Ferdinand says of Miranda, that she is "created of every creature's best." Certainly Imogen unites in a high degree most of the qualities which should belong to a perfect woman. She possesses in a manner peculiar to herself the mingled traits of character which distinguish Shakespeare's other women. With regard to this Mrs. Jameson makes some striking remarks. She shows how Imogen can vow as enthusiastically as Juliet, be as entirely sincere, and pursue an end she has set before herself, with as steadfast a resolution as Helena. She is as blamelessly pure and chaste, as virtuous and as true-hearted as Isabella; as lovely and gentle as Viola; as prudent and capable of self-control as Portia. But, on the other hand, she is less fantastic than Juliet, less lively and witty than Portia, less serious than Helena and Isabella, her dignity is not so imposing as Hermione's. Her submission, although infinite, is not so passive as Desdemona's, and therefore, despite her resemblance to all these, she is distinct from them. With consummate art and tender beauty the poet describes her relations with her husband. She loves him as deeply and warmly as Juliet loves her

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Romeo, but this love has nothing of the precipitate passion of the ardent Italian. On the other hand, she knows nothing of the alternations between hope, fear, and the highest bliss of love which accompany the suddenly ripened passion of the inexperienced girl who was but yesterday a child. She has grown up side by side with her beloved; her love has been as it were habitual from earliest youth, although familiarity has not dimmed the glow of passion. When she gives herself to him at the altar, she regards this passion as her most sacred duty. Calmly and with dignity, she informs her angry father of her love and secret marriage.

> *Cym.* Thou took'st a beggar; would'st have made my throne
> A seat for baseness.
> *Imo.* No; I rather added
> A lustre to it.
> *Cym.* O thou vile one!
> *Imo.* Sir,
> It is your fault that I have loved Posthumus:
> You bred him as my playfellow, and he is
> A man worth any woman, overbuys me
> Almost the sum he pays.—*Cymbeline*, act i. scene 1.

In the scene where Posthumus, whom Cymbeline has banished, takes leave of her, although plunged in deep grief, she is resigned and confident in her tenderness, without suffering the agonised despair which wrings Juliet's heart at the moment of parting:

> My dearest husband,
> I something fear my father's wrath; but nothing—
> Always reserved my holy duty—what
> His rage can do on me: you must be gone;
> And I shall here abide the hourly shot
> Of angry eyes, not comforted to live,
> But that there is this jewel in the world
> That I may see again.—*Cymbeline*, act i. scene 1.

When he is gone, she does not break into loud lamentations. Her grief is tranquil, but so overmastering that it makes her insensible to all other pain, even to her father's anger.

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Imo. There cannot be a pinch in death
More sharp than this is.
Cym. O disloyal thing,
Thou shouldst repair my youth, thou heap'st
A year's age on me.
Imo. I beseech you, sir,
Harm not yourself with your vexation:
I am senseless of your wrath; a touch more rare
Subdues all pangs, all fears.
Cym. Past grace? obedience?
Imo. Past hope, and in despair; that way, past grace.
Cymbeline, act i. scene 1.

I add the following passage from her dialogue with the servant Pisanio, who had accompanied the banished Leonatus to the haven whence he embarked, because Imogen's wifely tenderness and her depth of feeling find in it the most charming reflection:

Imo. I did not take my leave of him, but had
Most pretty things to say: ere I could tell him
How I would think on him at certain hours
Such thoughts and such, or I could make him swear
The shes of Italy should not betray
Mine interest and his honour, or have charged him,
At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,
To encounter me with orisons, for then
I am in heaven for him; or ere I could
Give him that parting kiss which I had set
Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father
And like the tyrannous breathing of the north,
Shakes all our buds from growing.—*Cymbeline*, act i. scene 3.

It is difficult to excuse the behaviour of the woman's husband. He who possesses a wife with so pure and lovely a character, of such intense tenderness, such profound immovable faith in his truth and honour, should never lay a frivolous wager upon the virtue of her whose honour he should have held as exalted and holy, nor permit a strange man to put it to the proof. The poet, therefore, fully conscious of the unworthiness of this action on the part of Leonatus, has spent much skill in constructing and conceiving the scene of the dispute between Posthumus

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and Iachimo, in order to enhance its probability, and in this particular has far surpassed the rougher treatment of the original tale. The malice of the Italian demon provokes Leonatus' high and noble spirit with such hellish cunning, that he becomes the challenged rather than the challenger, and cannot decline the certainly inexcusable wager without throwing a doubt on his own courage and absolute confidence in his wife's virtue. After a Frenchman at a banquet in the house of Philario in Rome has related to the assembled company that Leonatus had almost come to a bloody argument with one of his countrymen, because he asserted, and wished to maintain at the sword's point, that his lady was fairer, more virtuous, wiser, more modest, constant and unapproachable than any of the rarest French dames, the conversation proceeds as follows:

Iach. That lady is not now living, or this gentleman's opinion by this worn out.

Post. She holds her virtue still, and I my mind.

Iach. You must not so far prefer her 'fore ours of Italy.

Post. Being so far provoked as I was in France, I would abate her nothing, though I profess myself her adorer, not her friend.

Iach. As fair and as good—a kind of hand-in-hand comparison—had been something too fair and too good for any lady in Britain. If she went before others I have seen, as that diamond of yours outlustres many I have beheld, I could not but believe she excelled many: but I have not seen the most precious diamond that is, nor you the lady.

Post. I praised her as I rated her; so do I my stone.

Iach. What do you esteem it at?

Post. More than the world enjoys.

Iach. Either your unparagoned mistress is dead, or she's outprized by a trifle.

Post. You are mistaken: the one may be sold, or given, if there were wealth enough for the purchase or merit for the gift: the other is not a thing for sale, and only the gift of the gods.

Iach. Which the gods have given you?

Post. Which, by their graces, I will keep.

Iach. You may wear her in title yours; but, you know, strange fowl light upon neighbouring ponds. Your ring may be stolen too; so your brace of unprizable estimations; the one is but frail and the other casual; a cunning thief, or a that-way accomplished courtier, would hazard the winning both of first and last.

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Post. Your Italy contains none so accomplished a courtier to convince the honour of my mistress, if, in the holding or loss of that, you term her frail. I do nothing doubt you have store of thieves; notwithstanding, I fear not my ring.—*Cymbeline*, act i. scene 4.

The host tries to interrupt the discourse, which seems to him to be taking a dangerous turn. Posthumus is ready to desist, but Iachimo will not consent.

Iach. With five times so much conversation, I should get ground of your fair mistress, make her go back, even to the yielding, had I admittance and opportunity to friend.

Post. No, no.

Iach. I dare thereupon pawn the moiety of my estate to your ring; which, in my opinion, o'ervalues it something: but I make my wager rather against your confidence than her reputation; and, to bar your offence herein too, I durst attempt it against any lady in the world.

Post. You are a great deal abused in too bold a persuasion; and I doubt not you sustain what you're worthy of by your attempt.

Iach. What's that?

Post. A repulse: though your attempt, as you call it, deserve more; a punishment too.—*Cymbeline*, act i. scene 4.

Again the host strives in vain to induce the now heated combatants to cease wrangling. To the angry question of Posthumus, "What lady would you choose to assail?" Iachimo answers with the distinct challenge:

Iach. Yours; whom in constancy you think stands so safe. I will lay you ten thousand ducats to your ring, that, commend me to the court where your lady is, with no more advantage than the opportunity of a second conference, and I will bring from thence that honour of hers which you imagine so reserved.

Post. I will wage against your gold, gold to it: my ring I hold dear as my finger; 'tis part of it.

Iach. You are afraid, and therein the wiser. If you buy ladies' flesh at a million a dram, you cannot preserve it from tainting: but I see you have some religion in you, that you fear.

Post. This is but a custom in your tongue; you bear a graver purpose, I hope.

Iach. I am the master of my speeches, and would undergo what's spoken, I swear.

Post. Will you? I shall but lend my diamond till your return: let there be covenants drawn between's: my mistress exceeds in goodness the hugeness of your unworthy thinking: I dare you to this match: here's my ring.

Phi. I will have it no lay.

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Iach. By the gods, it is one. If I bring you no sufficient testimony that I have enjoyed the dearest bodily part of your mistress, my ten thousand ducats are yours; so is your diamond too: if I come off, and leave her in such honour as you have trust in, she your jewel, this your jewel, and my gold are yours: provided I have your commendation for my more free entertainment.

Post. I embrace these conditions; let us have articles betwixt us. Only, thus far you shall answer: if you make your voyage upon her, and give me directly to understand you have prevailed, I am no further your enemy; she is not worth our debate: if she remain unseduced, you not making it appear otherwise, for your ill opinion and the assault you have made to her chastity you shall answer me with your sword.

Iach. Your hand; a covenant: we will have these things set down by lawful counsel, and straight away for Britain, lest the bargain should catch cold and starve: I will fetch my gold and have our two wagers recorded.—*Cymbeline*, act i. scene 4.

I may be allowed to make an observation here with regard to a point of Shakespeare's technique which I believe I have discovered. I hinted at this before in connection with an entirely different scene. Shakespeare in his works is often his own critic, showing plainly that he knows very well when he has introduced something monstrous or psychologically difficult of belief. Thus, after the almost intolerable scene in which Richard of Gloster obtains his improbable triumph over female weakness, he causes this same Richard to express, in a monologue, all the objections that might occur to the reader or spectator of the scene. I find here even a more striking example of this habit. He seems to formulate a criticism so severe, nay, so destructive of the scene he has himself created, as no outsider could have worded more harshly or severely. In spite of the art with which the dispute is conducted by the poet, it affects us most unpleasantly. We do not feel it consistent with the high-minded and ideal temperament of Leonatus that he should make the most precious thing he knows on earth, the virtue and honour of his adoring wife, the subject of so frivolous a wager, and that, too, with a man insolent, unscrupulous, and wanting in reverence. But what does Shakespeare do? He himself brings it about that his Leonatus, who has so far forgotten his own dignity

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and that of his noble wife, should suffer the monstrous consequences of his deed, which stands in absolute contradiction to every fundamental rule of honour, causing these consequences to grow with pitiless logic from out of his own unnatural proceedings. In civilised society and among honourable men there is no more unpardonable offence than an attempt upon the virtue and chastity of a man's wife. The codes of honour of all educated peoples agree that such an insult can only be washed out in blood. Leonatus, after he has been led into his criminal wager, after he has authorised his opponent to make the attempt, arrives at an unnatural conclusion. He is forced to inform him that he will no longer be his enemy if he succeeds in conquering his wife's virtue, and that he can only demand satisfaction from him at the sword's point in case the criminal attempt fails which he, the husband, has formally sanctioned. As I said, no more destructive criticism could be passed on Leonatus' unnatural conduct than the poet's own showing with pitiless logic the unnatural consequences to which such conduct must lead.

The first meeting of the libertine Iachimo with Imogen, and the effect produced upon him by her noble and unapproachable aspect, reveals to him that here he is not dealing with one of those women with whom he is accustomed to associate, and from whose lightness he has conceived his contemptuous opinion of the whole sex. He perceives at once that the usual arts of seduction, which have won him many easy victories over worthless women, can be of no avail here. With diabolical cunning he goes on another tack, hoping thus to obtain success. He strives to shake her faith in her husband's constancy and to make her jealous. His method, not by open statements, but through half-muttered, malicious insinuations, forcibly reminds us of Iago. At first he tries by subtle hints to make her believe that Leonatus is always cheerful, nay, wildly gay. He does not,

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he says, behave as if he were an unhappy exile, parted from a dearly loved and lately wedded wife, but as if his only thought were to lead a careless life of pleasure. Imogen, who has not known a happy moment since Leonatus left her, necessarily feels deeply wounded at this news. She feels convinced he must be sadly changed in that case, for she says, "When he was here, he did incline to sadness, and oft-time not knowing why." When Iachimo goes on to accuse him, in more definite terms, of falsehood and unfaithfulness, she finds no words to express her grief save the gentle despondent phrase, "My lord, I fear, has forgot Britain." When the villain proceeds to throw off the mask, declaring his criminal passion, and conjuring her in glowing terms to accord him her favour, and thus, while crowning his bliss, to avenge herself upon her unfaithful husband, her noble indignation thus breaks forth:

> *Imo.* Away! I do condemn mine ears that have
> So long attended thee. If thou wert honourable,
> Thou wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not
> For such an end thou seek'st—as base as strange.
> Thou wrong'st a gentleman, who is as far
> From thy report as thou from honour, and
> Solicit'st here a lady that disdains
> Thee and the devil alike. What ho, Pisanio!*
>
> *Cymbeline*, act i. scene 6.

When he perceives that Imogen's virtue is not to be shaken by slandering her husband, the wretch changes his tone. He has already resolved to simulate success through some devilish trick, since it is plain success itself is out of the question. He lets Imogen believe that it was only for love of Leonatus that he put her to the proof, and then pours out such enthusiastic praises of her husband that she completely forgives him, although, throughout the rest of the scene, she preserves a cool and reserved attitude towards the man who, though only apparently, insulted her

* The name of Leonatus' servant, whom he has left in Britain.

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so shamelessly. She says but little, answering him in short, cool phrases. Nevertheless she accedes to his request, made with the intention of carrying out his crime, that she will allow a coffer, which, according to his account, holds great treasures that he is taking back with him to Rome as presents to the Emperor, and for which he cannot find safe keeping at the court, to remain in her chamber until his departure. In this chest he causes himself to be carried into Imogen's room, getting out at night while she sleeps, and noting various trifles about the chamber. His insolent researches go to the length of discovering a mole upon her breast, and his thievish hand robs a bracelet, Leonatus' lost gift, from her arm. Thus are obtained the proofs that shall convince Leonatus that he has triumphed over his wife's virtue. The speech he makes while looking at the beautiful sleeping woman gives a charming picture of her sweetness and grace:

> *Iach.* Cytherea,
> How bravely thou becomest thy bed, fresh lily,
> And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!
> But kiss; one kiss! Rubies unparagon'd,
> How dearly they do't! 'Tis her breathing that
> Perfumes the chamber thus: the flame o' the taper
> Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids,
> To see the enclosèd lights, now canopied
> Under these windows, white and azure laced
> With blue of heaven's own tinct.—*Cymbeline*, act ii. scene 2.

Before we examine the effect of Iachimo's rascally trick upon Leonatus and the tragic adventures of Imogen which ensue thence, we must turn our attention to a scene which will help us to understand her character as a whole. This is a conversation between her and her step-brother Cloten, the bridegroom chosen for her by her father and step-mother. This takes place on the morning after Iachimo had perpetrated his crime. Cloten is a malicious fool, whose foolishness springs not so much from want of intellect as from want of heart. It is rather his moral nature than his

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mind that is perverted. His judgment is sometimes keen and correct, but in nothing that he says or does can we discover the least spark of warm human feeling. He is a mixture of helplessness, boorishness, and malice, and must arouse in a noble refined nature like Imogen's only a feeling of extreme dislike, disgust and repulsion. This hateful suitor, as well as his mother, who shrinks from no intrigues, not even from murder, justify Imogen's action in setting herself in opposition to her filial duty, and at the same time place the gentle, tender, yet strong and heroic, features of her character in a clear light. She is as amiable as she is resolute. In this dialogue she addresses him first with profound contempt:

> *Imo.* I am much sorry, sir,
> You put me to forget a lady's manners,
> By being so verbal: and learn now, for all,
> That I, which know my heart, do here pronounce,
> By the very truth of it, I care not for you,
> And am so near the lack of charity—
> To accuse myself—I hate you; which I had rather
> You felt than make 't my boast.—*Cymbeline*, act ii. scene 3.

When, however, he begins vulgarly to abuse the absent Leonatus, her noble indignation breaks forth, and she enthusiastically defends the man he abused, and who cannot defend himself:

> *Imo.* Profane fellow!
> Wert thou the son of Jupiter and no more
> But what thou art besides, thou wert too base
> To be his groom: thou wert dignified enough,
> Even to the point of envy, if 'twere made
> Comparative for your virtues, to be styled
> The under-hangman of his kingdom, and hated
> For being preferr'd so well.
> *Cio.* The south-fog rot him!
> *Imo.* He never can meet more mischance than come
> To be but named of thee. His meanest garment,
> That ever hath but clipp'd his body, is dearer
> In my respect than all the hairs above thee,
> Were they all made such men.—*Cymbeline*, act ii. scene 3.

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Imogen has already discovered the loss of her bracelet. The speech in which she orders Pisanio to bid her chamber-woman search for it furnishes another picture of her profound tenderness for her husband:

> *Imo.* Go bid my woman
> Search for a jewel that too casually
> Hath left mine arm: it was thy master's: 'shrew me,
> If I would lose it for a revenue
> Of any king's in Europe. I do think
> I saw't this morning: confident I am
> Last night 'twas on mine arm; I kiss'd it:
> I hope it be not gone to tell my lord
> That I kiss aught but he.—*Cymbeline*, act ii. scene 3.

Iachimo has carried out his scurvy trick. Leonatus long refuses credence to the calumny, until the description of the mole and the sight of the bracelet convince him. His jealous rage equals the love and reverence he felt for his wife. Revenge is his only thought. The wicked creature, who used to restrain him, her lawful husband, with so rosy a modesty that she might have warmed old Saturn, has given herself to this "yellow" Iachimo in less than an hour. She must die. He writes two letters, one to Imogen, which must find a place here because its contents show Shakespeare's wonderful versatility. In three great dramas, the same passion, jealousy, is the motive action, but in each he depicts it in the most different manner, though always in masterly mode, and always in perfect keeping with the characters affected by it. Leonatus also writes a letter to Pisanio, ordering him to give the other letter to his mistress, to bring her to the place indicated, and when he arrives there to murder her, as she is an unfaithful wife. The letter to Imogen is as follows:

> Justice, and your father's wrath, should he take me in his dominion, could not be so cruel to me, as you, O the dearest of creatures, would even renew me with your eyes. Take notice that I am in Cambria, at Milford-Haven: what your own love will out of this advise you, follow. So he wishes you all happiness, that remains loyal to his vow, and your, increasing in love,
>
> LEONATUS POSTHUMUS.

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This letter is not calculated to raise Leonatus in our estimation. As compared with the other two victims of jealousy, Othello and Leontes, it puts him in deep shadow. Neither the noble artless Othello, whom the wicked craft of diabolical Iago delivers into the power of the "green-eyed monster," nor the self-tormenting Leontes, who himself prepares his terrible delusion, allowing his better nature to be overpowered, would have been capable of writing such a letter, and at the same instant, when he is influenced by furious rage, and moved only by desire of vengeance, of simulating tender love, to entrap his wife into a frightful death. Othello and Leontes do not feign tenderness or confidence. After the terrible passion has mastered their natures, their love is turned into burning hatred of the wives they believe to have betrayed the most sacred pledge. They meet their unfaithful spouses with undisguised rage. The one puts all his royal power in motion to punish the supposed traitress. The other takes the avenging weapon in his own hand and destroys the life of her whose falsehood has turned his brain. The road chosen by Leonatus is indicated by the entirely different situation in which he finds himself, and the state of mind into which the supposed discovery of his wife's falsehood has thrown him. He is separated from her by the breadth of a continent; he is in danger if he returns to the country whence he was banished, of falling into the hands of his enemies, and thus seeing his attempted vengeance frustrated. The feeling which actuates him, after he has been induced by apparently irrefragable proofs, to credit Iachimo's calumny, is more contempt than anger, wherefore he considers any means permissible to destroy a creature fallen so low. None the less do we feel unpleasantly impressed by this proceeding, and all the more because the demeanour of the noble victim is so full of touching magnanimity in contrast to his cruelty and falsehood.

The faithful servant who has received the terrible order

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knows his mistress better than Leonatus. 'He sees plainly that one of those false Italians, as clever at poisoning with the tongue as with the hand, has betrayed the ear of Leonatus by tricks and calumnious lies. He, who has been daily witness of Imogen's blameless life and fidelity toward her cruel husband, deems his suspicions monstrous, and shrinks with horror from the thought of shedding this pure and noble blood. The impression which her husband's letter makes upon Imogen is touching. He is in Britain, he calls me off to him, then, on the wings of love, as swiftly as may be, let a world of obstacles lie in my way, is her only thought.

> *Imo.* O, for a horse with wings! Hear'st thou, Pisanio?
> He is at Milford-Haven: read, and tell me
> How far 'tis thither. If one of mean affairs
> May plod it in a week, why may not I
> Glide thither in a day? Then, true Pisanio,—
> Who long'st, like me, to see thy lord; who long'st,—
> O, let me 'bate—but not like me—yet long'st,
> But in a fainter kind:—O, not like me;
> For mine's beyond beyond—say and speak thick;
> Love's counsellor should fill the bores of hearing,
> To the smothering of the sense—how far it is
> To this same blessed Milford: and by the way
> Tell me how Wales was made so happy as
> To inherit such a haven: but first of all,
> How we may steal from hence, and for the gap
> That we shall make in time, from our hence-going
> And our return, to excuse: but first, how get hence:
> Why should excuse be born or e'er begot?
> We'll talk of that hereafter. Prithee, speak,
> How many score of miles may we well ride
> 'Twixt hour and hour?—*Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 2.

At Pisanio's remark, who with secret agony beholds the loving haste of the unfortunate lady and her longing to reach the place where so sad a fate awaits her, "that twenty miles a day are enough for her strength," Imogen impatiently answers:

> *Imo.* Why, one that rode to's execution, man,
> Could never go so slow; I have heard of riding wagers,

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Where horses have been nimbler than the sands
That run i' the clock's behalf.

. . . . . .

I see before me, man; nor here, nor here,
Nor what ensues, but have a fog in them,
That I cannot look through. Away, I prithee;
Do as I bid thee: there's no more to say;
Accessible is none but Milford way.—*Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 2.

They reach Milford Haven. Although Pisanio assured her that they would soon arrive, when she alights from her horse and does not find the husband for whom she longs as her mother never longed for her, Pisanio's grim silence, his changed features, indicate that something dreadful is in the air, but her unsuspecting nature does not guess the truth. No fears for her own safety assail her, her loving heart dreads lest a misfortune has overtaken her beloved:

Imo. What is in thy mind,
That makes thee stare thus? Wherefore breaks that sigh
From the inward of thee? One, but painted thus,
Would be interpreted a thing perplex'd
Beyond self-explication: put thyself
Into a 'haviour of less fear, ere wildness
Vanquish my staider senses. What's the matter?
Why tender'st thou that paper to me with
A look untender? If 't be summer news,
Smile to 't before; if winterly, thou need'st
But keep that countenance still. My husband's hand!
That drug-damn'd Italy hath out-craftied him,
And he's at some hard point. Speak, man: thy tongue
May take off some extremity, which to read
Would be even mortal to me.—*Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 4.

She reads the frightful page that tells her that her husband's tender love-letter is only an artful trick to lure her unwitting to the spot where the servant is to put her to death, according to Leonatus' cruel order, because she has been unfaithful. The terribly vehement impression the discovery produces, the idea of a suspicion which blurs her reputation, threatens her life, and treats her on a level with the basest of her sex, is painted in Pisanio's words: "What,

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shall I need to draw my sword? The paper hath cut her throat already." Most powerful are the following lines, which paint calumny and its destructive effect:

> *Pis.* No, 'tis slander,
> Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue
> Outvenoms all the worms of Nile, whose breath
> Rides on the posting winds and doth belie
> All corners of the world: kings, queens, and states,
> Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave
> This viperous slander enters.—*Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 4.

In the manner in which Imogen meets the insulting suspicions of her husband is seen a profound difference between the other two victims of unjust jealousy created by Shakespeare, Desdemona and Hermione. This contrast arises naturally from Imogen's entirely different apprehension of her husband's outspoken suspicion. Desdemona, in her artless innocence, is slow to comprehend what she is accused of, and when it becomes clear to her at last after her husband flings a degrading epithet in her face, she has neither the power to weep nor the strength to contradict him and defend herself. Hermione meets the senseless accusation with the dignity and self-command of a heart fully conscious of innocence, like a matron, mother, and queen. Imogen is in an entirely different position. At first she feels death-struck by the unexpected accusation, as we note from Pisanio's words ere ever she opens her lips. When she speaks, only piteous questions throng from her mouth. How can any make such accusations against her who lives only in her love?

> *Imo.* False to his bed! What is it to be false?
> To lie in watch there and to think on him?
> To weep 'twixt clock and clock? if sleep charge nature,
> To break it with a fearful dream of him
> And cry myself awake? that's false to 's bed, is it?
> *Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 4.

Then a natural reaction follows such as we do not find either in Desdemona or Hermione. Her outraged sense

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of justice, her anger at the wrong done to her, breaks loose in bitter scornful speech, such as the poet has not put into the mouth of the other women. And this is natural. The others have only to deal with their husband's jealousy. Imogen does not believe in his jealousy: she considers it a pretext for Leonatus to rid himself of her in order, being himself false, to abandon himself without hindrance to a new love. The poisonous seed Iachimo has sown in her heart has grown; even as Leonatus believed the rascal's calumnies, she now believes the insinuations he uttered. Thus her husband's action appears doubly atrocious: he justifies his own breach of faith through his hypocritical and degrading accusation against her, and then, by the order to murder given to his servant, he designs to remove the obstacle that stands in the path of his new love:

> *Imo.* I false! Thy conscience witness: Iachimo,
> Thou didst accuse him of incontinency;
> Thou then look'dst like a villain; now methinks
> Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy,
> Whose mother was her painting, hath betray'd him:
> Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion;
> And, for I am richer than to hang by the walls,
> I must be ripp'd:—to pieces with me!—O,
> Men's vows are women's traitors! All good seeming,
> By thy revolt, O husband, shall be thought
> Put on for villainy; not born where 't grows,
> But worn a bait for ladies.—*Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 4.

She declares that since Leonatus has fallen from truth and honesty, no gentleman's word shall ever more be held true or faithful. But she submits, without remonstrance, without complaint or lamentation, to the sentence of death pronounced by her husband. In the tale which suggested Shakespeare's drama she entreats the servant to spare her. "The lady, seeing the knife and hearing the words, said, in affright, 'Mercy, for God's sake! before you kill me tell me how I have injured you that you should kill me? For God's sake do not become the murderer of one who never

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injured you, to please another. God, who knows all things, knows that I never did anything for which I deserved to receive such a reward from my husband.'" Shakespeare's Imogen, on the contrary, says to Pisanio:

> *Imo.* Come, fellow, be thou honest:
> Do thou thy master's bidding: when thou see'st him,
> A little witness my obedience: look!
> I draw the sword myself; take it, and hit
> The innocent mansion of my love, my heart:
> Fear not; 'tis empty of all things but grief:
> Thy master is not there, who was indeed
> The riches of it: do his bidding; strike
> Thou mayst be valiant in a better cause;
> But now thou seem'st a coward.—*Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 4.

The faithful servant, who, on the one hand, feels deep pity for his slandered lady, of whose innocence and purity he is convinced, and, on the other, knows that in obeying his master's orders he will be doing him anything but good service, refuses to perform the cruel act, and flings away in horror the sword which Imogen offers. He proposes to inform her husband that his order has been executed, that she should disguise herself as a man, for which purpose he would procure the necessary means, and join the noble Lucius, the Emperor's ambassador, who, returning to Rome after the failure of the treaty, would pass by Milford the next morning. She accedes to the proposal, consoling herself with the reflection:

> *Imo.* Hath Britain all the sun that shines? day, night,
> Are they not but in Britain? I' the world's volume
> Our Britain seems as of it, but not in't;
> In a great pool a swan's nest: prithee, think
> There's livers out of Britain.—*Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 4.

Besides a suit of clothes, Pisanio gives her the phial which the queen told him contained a medicinal draught, while she believes it to contain a deadly poison, and then takes leave of her. But though her character is noble, resolute, and almost virile, her body is only that of a weak woman

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exhausted by wandering in strange regions. For two nights she roams without food or shelter, the bare earth her bed. Only her steadfast resolution sustains her strength. The thought of her false husband at first dulled the hunger of which she now feels ready to perish. In midst of the forest she finds a path which apparently leads to a human abode. She fears to awake some foe by calling, but the pangs of hunger are keen. She calls out, gaining courage from necessity. No answer. She resolves to enter. Here follows a truly Shakespearian touch, which in this serious drama recalls the humorous situation in which Viola finds herself in *Twelfth Night* when with great reluctance she draws her sword, and only takes courage when she finds that her masculine adversary is a greater coward than herself. Imogen draws her sword, saying before she enters the cave of which she has found the opening, "Best draw my sword; and if mine enemy but fear the sword like me, he'll scarcely look on't."

And now we have reached the point where the two actions out of which Shakespeare has combined the fable of "Cymbeline" are interwoven. The cave, Imogen has found, chances to be the shelter to which Belarius brought her two brothers, Guiderius and Arviragus, and where he has trained them to be brave and noble, if not highly educated men.

On returning from the chase they find Imogen, who, driven by hunger, has eaten of the food she found in the cave. Her charming personality fascinates the youths; it seems as if the voice of nature drew these brothers towards the sister they have so strangely met. Imogen remains in the cave, and is treated by them with great kindness and tender respect. Meanwhile, her flight, and the simultaneous disappearance of Pisanio from the court, has been discovered, and thrown the king into such a paroxysm of rage that no one dares approach him. The queen's malignant character shows itself in her joy over

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the disappearance of Imogen, which opens the way for her ambitious plans:

> *Queen.* Gone she is
> To death or to dishonour; and my end
> Can make good use of either: she being down,
> I have the placing of the British crown.
>
> *Cymbeline*, act iii. scene 5.

In her evil desires, when Cloten tells her of Cymbeline's outrageous anger:

> All the better: may
> This night forestall him of the coming day.

Pisanio, who, after his sad parting with Imogen, has returned to the court, is forced by Cloten's threats to give him the letter with which Leonatus lured his wife to Milford, and Cloten resolves to seek her out and take a bloody vengeance for her contemptuous rejection of his hand. She once said to him, scornfully, that she more honoured Posthumus' meanest garment than the whole of his noble person and all his qualities. In the same clothes in which Posthumus bade her farewell, which Pisanio must procure for him, "with that suit upon my back," he says, "will I ravish her: first kill him, and in her eyes; there shall she see my valour, which will then be a torment to her contempt. He on the ground, my speech of insultment ended on his dead body, and when my lust hath dined—which, as I say to vex her, I will execute it in the clothes that she so praised—to the court I'll knock her back, foot her home again. She hath despised me rejoicingly, and I'll be merry in my revenge." The queen's malice and Cloten's vindictiveness serve to set off the lovely ethereal figure of Imogen, who remained noble and pure in such surroundings. But Cloten finds death instead of vengeance. Guiderius, called Polydor by his supposed father Belarius, enraged by Cloten's insolent bluster, kills him, although he made himself known as the queen's son, and cuts off his head. Meantime, Imogen, who feels ill and worn out after

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her long wanderings, has recourse to the remedy the queen gave to Pisanio as an excellent medicine. But the great criminal had herself been deceived. The physician Cornelius, to whom, under false pretences, she had given the order for the poisonous draught, divining her fatal purpose, had given her instead, a potion which "will stupefy and dull the sense awhile to be more fresh reviving." Consequently the drug only throws Imogen into a deathlike trance, during which she is laid by her affectionate brothers, who believe her dead, with touching dirges and lamentations, into the open grave of their mother Eriphile. While they are gathering flowers for the funeral which is to take place that night, the unhappy princess awakes, but only to renewed distress. She sees the headless corpse of Cloten. We know that he had repaired to Milford in the garments of Posthumus, and hence, Imogen believes that it is her husband's corpse she beholds. In wild and delirious phrases she blames Cloten, whom she believes has suborned Pisanio. And now opens the third action of which the fable is composed—that is, the conflict of Britain with the Roman Empire. Cymbeline has refused to pay tribute to the Roman Emperor. The Roman army under the command of Cajus Lucius is on its way to compel his obedience. The construction of the play becomes somewhat confused and involved through the multiplicity of action; so that it is difficult to disentangle the threads or to keep them apart. The scene changes continually from one place to another; we are carried alternately to Rome and Britain, from the battlefield in the vicinity of Milford Haven to the king's court, and back again. It is difficult to resist the impression that the drama can only be acted either after a thorough rearrangement or after a reform of the *mise en scène*, such as was attempted in Munich. I do not agree here with Gervinius when he asserts that *Cymbeline* is a work of art only to be compared to the finest Shakespeare produced. I can only endorse this judgment with regard to the delineation of the characters,

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which are certainly masterly. The ethereal figure of Imogen; the wicked and hypocritical queen; rough, stupid, incapable Cloten; the weak, irresolute king; the sincere, noble, innocent sons of Cymbeline, who in a forest solitude have learnt neither impurity nor passion; the princely Leonatus, whom we only reproach for the inexcusable wager regarding his wife's truth; nay, even the villain Iachimo, are characters set before us with a graphic truth that arouses sincere admiration. But the construction, especially in the latter part of the play, is misty and confused, and the poet, to loosen the tangled threads, has recourse to an expedient he never employed elsewhere—that is, the apparition of a god as *deus ex machina.* It cannot be alleged, in justification of this apparition, that it is only a dream of Leonatus, because the Jupiter who appears to him is no vision conjured up by the fancy of the sleeping prisoner. He really appears in person with the other spirits belonging to Leonatus' house. He lays on his breast the tablet on which is written the enigmatical prophecy, so cleverly interpreted by the soothsayer. Whoever compares this denouement with the art generally shown by Shakespeare in bringing his dramas to a close, must endorse my opinion that *Cymbeline* is greatly inferior in this respect. A continual succession of scenes, which with the exception of the last have no real bearing on Imogen's character, brings the different actions to their catastrophe. First, Imogen weeping over the supposed corpse of her husband is discovered by Lucius, marching at the head of the invading army. The charm she exerts over all who see her, even in her masculine garb, wins the Roman general, and she is taken into his service as a page. Then we are carried to the king's court. We find the monarch during a very short scene in a piteous state of distress. All troubles break at once on his head. His stepson has disappeared; his queen has fallen into a mortal illness; the Roman army is marching on his capital. The deluded sovereign still supposes his wife and stepson

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to be his friends; he laments the loss of their advice and assistance in his present need. Then we are conducted into the midst of the noise of battle. First, we find the king's two sons excited by the clamour of war that rings around them. The noble youths are irresistibly impelled to take part in the hotly contested fight, and old Belarius, who sees "that on their lives they set so slight a valuation," leads them into battle with these words:

> Have with you, boys!
> If in your country wars you chance to die,
> That is my bed too, lads, and there I'll lie.

Cymbeline's deluded and weak judgment is clearly revealed by the circumstance that while the queen and Cloten, to whom he has always been kind and trusting, think of nothing but deceiving him for their own purposes, all those to whom he has been harsh and unjust are ready to give their lives for their sovereign and for Britain. Posthumus, whom he drove unjustly from his court, as well as Belarius, whom also he drove out on unjust suspicion, resolve to take part in the war. They carry out this resolution disguised as common British soldiers. Through two scenes the battle rages before us. We need only read the stage directions to understand the remark I made in the chapter on the English stage before Shakespeare, that our poet ventured to put on the stage things that were almost impossible, only because he knew well that these orders would not be really carried out, but simply indicated. The directions are, "Enter, at one side, Lucius, Iachimo, and the Roman army; at the other side the British army, Leonatus Posthumus following it, like a poor soldier. They march over and go out. Alarums." Even the modern stage, with all its mechanical appliances, cannot put such a march in battle array with real exactitude before its spectators; much must be left to the imagination. The two men who made the unhappy bet, the deluded husband

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and the wretch who robbed an innocent wife of her happiness, meet during battle without recognising each other. Iachimo is conquered and disarmed. His evil conscience makes him consider this disgraceful defeat, which he supposed due to the hand of a peasant, as a punishment for his crime against Imogen:

> *Iach.* The heaviness and guilt within my bosom
> Takes off my manhood: I have belied a lady,
> The princess of this country, and the air on't
> Revengingly enfeebles me; or could this carl,
> A very drudge of nature's, have subdued me
> In my profession? Knighthoods and honours, borne
> As I wear mine, are titles but of scorn.—*Cymbeline*, act v. scene 2.

The battle is already turning in favour of the Romans. The Britons are preparing for flight; Cymbeline himself is taken. The onslaught of Belarius and the young princes and the heroic valour of Posthumus change the fortunes of the day. The king is released, the Roman army routed. Its two leaders, Lucius and Iachimo, are taken prisoners. Posthumus, who has helped so much to win the victory, is ashamed to receive any thanks. His soliloquy tells how he sought death in battle through grief for the supposed falsehood of Imogen, whom he looked on as the ideal of highest chastity and purity of soul, and also from remorse for her death, which he believes Pisanio has compassed by his order. He once more assumes his Roman dress and surrenders himself to a British captain as a prisoner. The Briton brings him before Cymbeline, who confines him in a dungeon. Here the negligent technique which Shakespeare displays in the latter part of *Cymbeline* becomes very evident. At the close of the third scene of the fourth act, Leonatus is led to the dungeon, and just at the beginning of the fourth scene we see him enter the prison with two jailors. In this prison appears to him that vision of which we have already spoken as being an expedient unworthy of Shakespeare, and which is, besides, not a dream, but an

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actual apparition of Leonatus' dead father and Jupiter, who leaves behind him in the enigmatical prophecy a tangible proof of his presence. The last scene, which takes place in Cymbeline's palace, brings about the denouement of the various actions of which the fable is composed. While regretting that the peasant cannot be found whose bravery, like that of the old man Belarius and the young princes, has contributed so much to the victory, in order that he may receive the thanks and reward due to him, Cymbeline raises his unknown sons and their foster-father to knighthood and to "dignities becoming their estates." The rejoicings over the victory are interrupted by the news of the queen's death, which is brought by the physician Cornelius. His account of her death and its attendant circumstances is once more in keeping with the hateful and malignant character of this woman. Her end was:

> With horror madly dying, like her life,
> Which, being cruel to the world, concluded
> Most cruel to herself.—*Cymbeline*, act v. scene 5.

She confessed before her death that she had never loved the king, but "affected greatness got by him, not him; married his royalty, was wife to his place, abhorred his person." She also confessed that Imogen, whom she professed to love, was "a scorpion to her sight," and that she would have poisoned her but for her flight. She acknowledged that she had for the king "a mortal mineral" which should "by the minute feed on life," and lingering by inches waste. In which time she purposed by "weeping, tending, watching, kissing, to overcome him with her dissimulation until he were persuaded to adopt her son as heir to the throne." But his disappearance, which frustrated her design, distracted her so that she died after confessing her sins against God and man. Cymbeline bitterly laments the folly which made him listen to her flattery, and deplores the loss of his daughter, whose mis-

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fortunes were due to his credulity. But his daughter is nearer than he thinks. She appears with Lucius and the other Roman prisoners, among whom are also Posthumus and Iachimo. Hence they are all three present, the villainous slanderer, the unfortunate victim, and the husband, so severely punished for his silly wager. Now opens the last scene, which on the one hand solves all the intrigues and enigmas, and, on the other, sets in a glowing light the heavenly purity and noble qualities of the lovely female figure who is the central point of this strange drama, putting the crowning touch to the development of her character. The Roman prisoners are all condemned to death, and the Roman lord Lucius, although he reminds Cymbeline of the chances of war, makes no attempt to save himself, but only begs for the life of his page, a Briton born:

> Never master had
> A page so kind, so duteous, diligent,
> So tender over his occasions, true,
> So feat, so nurse-like.—*Cymbeline*, act v. scene 5.

The voice of nature makes itself heard in Cymbeline:

> *Cym.* I have surely seen him:
> His favour is familiar to me. Boy,
> Thou hast look'd thyself into my grace,
> And art mine own. I know not why, wherefore,
> To say 'Live, boy:' ne'er thank thy master; live:
> And ask of Cymbeline what boon thou wilt,
> Fitting my bounty and thy state, I'll give it;
> Yea, though thou do demand a prisoner,
> The noblest ta'en.—*Cymbeline*, act v. scene 5.

Lucius hopes that his page, who has always shown himself so devoted, will sue for his liberty, and is painfully undeceived when the boy answers:

> *Imo.* No, no: alack,
> There's other work in hand: I see a thing
> Bitter to me as death: your life, good master,
> Must shuffle for itself.—*Cymbeline*, act v. scene 5.

Imogen has recognised Iachimo and Leonatus' ring on

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his finger. At the same time Guiderius and Arviragus notice how the page resembles the boy Fidele whom they supposed dead, and Pisanio recognises his mistress in her disguise. When Cymbeline, at the request of his unknown daughter, asks Iachimo how he came by his ring, the man, who has long suffered the pangs of an accusing conscience, breaks out into a confession of his villainy, and Posthumus hears how he was betrayed and how innocent was his victim. He now rages against himself, until Imogen discloses herself and Pisanio explains. Imogen now displays all her touching goodness of heart; for the father who cast her off, for the husband who ordered her death, she has only words of love and forgiveness; nay, she even utters a word of regret when she hears of the death of her cruel step-mother and deadly enemy. When Belarius reveals his secret, and the youths are recognised as Cymbeline's sons, he says to her, "Oh, Imogen, thou hast lost by this a kingdom!" She answers, "No, my lord, I have got two worlds by it," and turns with affectionate greeting to her brothers, whom during their short sojourn together in the forest she had learned to love. This sweet soul knows no low ambitious promptings. The interpretation of Jupiter's prophecy by the soothsayer, with his pedantic play upon words, makes anything but an agreeable literary impression. We can but repeat, on concluding our survey of this work, what we said during its progress, that as regards construction it cannot be ranked high, but that the woman's ethereal figure, around which the various actions group themselves more or less closely, belongs to the most lovely and most perfectly delineated of Shakespeare's female characters.

"THE TEMPEST"

Miranda

The critic Hazlitt says in the introduction to his essay on that remarkable fantastic drama of Shakespeare entitled *The Tempest*, "that there is certainly little doubt that Shakespeare

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is the most universal genius that ever lived. For tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral comedy, historico-pastoral, for unity of action and continuity of narrative, he has not his peer. He possesses not only unlimited power over our laughter and tears, over all the resources of passion, wit, thought, and observation, he possesses also unlimited power over the realm of fantasy, whether terrible or fascinating, the same insight into the world of imagination as into the world of reality. Everywhere reigns the same truth to character and nature, the same spirit of humanity." Strange as the forms of the remarks of the learned English writer may appear on account of the peculiar classification of the different styles of dramatic poetry, which, after all, is imitated from Polonius' introduction of the players in *Hamlet*, we must fully agree with this verdict. The truth of these remarks appear in a clear light if we consider the place taken by *The Tempest* in the mighty line of Shakespeare's works. The date of the piece rests upon two absolutely sure indications, which mutually complete each other, and is fixed beyond question. One of these indications is found among the extracts from the accounts of the court entertainments published in the Transactions of the Shakespearian Society. According to this, *The Tempest* was first represented on the 1st of November 1611 before the king at Whitehall. The other is a piece of circumstantial evidence which rests upon internal grounds, but whose inferences are as true as the former. Shakespeare plainly founded the action of this play upon an event which attracted the attention and sympathy of all England in the year 1609. In that year a certain George Somers set sail with nine ships for Virginia. The ships were separated from each other by a frightful storm; some of them reached Virginia after passing through great dangers, some returned the year after to England with the information that the flag-ship of the flotilla had probably perished. This was not, however, the case, for the ship was cast upon the Bermudas and saved. In the same year

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Silvester published a book with the title "Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called Devil's Island," which contained a detailed description of the frightful storm through which the admiral's ship had been separated from its companions. The ship had sprung a leak, the men were dead tired with their immense exertions at the pumps and had gone to sleep. They had renounced all hope of rescue, and resigning themselves to their fate, had taken leave of each other. Then the captain caught sight of land, and the ship, by good fortune, got wedged between two islands. On landing, they found themselves on an uninhabited island, one of a group, with an exceedingly mild climate, and of great fertility. These islands were known to earlier navigators, but were held by them to be enchanted. They were also in bad repute on account of the mighty tempests which perpetually raged round them. Shakespeare refers to these storms. It is plain that the poet of *The Tempest* was influenced by Jourdan's book, and hence, if we consider in this connection the notice of the production of the play between 1610 and 1611, we see that the opposite view, that *The Tempest* is one of Shakespeare's earlier plays, is entirely excluded. When we remember, besides, that *Julius Cæsar* appeared almost certainly in the year 1602 or 1603, and *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1608 or 1609, when, moreover, we consider that *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*, although we have no certain indications of the date of their production, belong to the latest period of Shakespeare's poetic activity, we here find beyond doubt a proof of that universality of genius to which Hazlitt alludes. In these plays, written much about the same time, the poet moves in different, nay, absolutely opposite spheres, dealing with each in the same masterly style, as if it alone were the native home of his genius. In the former plays he represents real political events with truth and a perfect historical sense, thus producing a deep impression on the clever and practical minds of his contemporaries. In *The Tempest* he deals,

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with the same surety and skill, with the realm of mediæval superstition, with the world of legend and fantasy, thus addressing the highly developed imagination of his public. There were two sources whence imagination drew rich nourishment in those days. The whole of Europe believed firmly in witchcraft and magic. Besides this, all the European peoples, and not least the English, were profoundly influenced by the succession of wonderful tales brought home by travellers—tales of newly discovered countries, often exaggerated by sensation-loving voyagers, but which, on that account, more excited the fancy of the hearers. In harmony with this spirit, Shakespeare presents to us a mighty magician who rules the whole spirit-world, and to whom he gives as habitation an enchanted island peopled with monsters and spirits. Fantastic as is the impression left by the play, and strongly distinguished as it is from Shakespeare's other dramatic works on account of its remoteness from reality or probability, the drama has one fundamental characteristic in common with the other works of this period of the poet's activity. He is apt in these works to represent actions in which bonds woven by nature, such as friendship, relationship, or gratitude, are broken in an unnatural manner by falsehood and deceit. Here, one brother has behaved falsely and ungratefully to another. Prospero, Duke of Milan, entirely occupied with his studies, has left the administration of the government to his brother Antonio, but his trust has been shamefully betrayed. Antonio's ambition, awakened by his brother's carelessness, had conducted him on the path of treachery and usurpation. He has deposed this brother, who lives only for his researches in the realm of magic art, with the help of the King of Naples, whose support he won by promising him that the dukedom of Milan should become tributary to the kingdom of Naples. He then made himself Duke, and sent his brother adrift to sea with his three-year old little daughter. Prospero has unwittingly contributed to his own deposition.

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He lived only for his studies, neglecting all outward and worldly things, and thus awakened his brother's evil desires that led to his fall. He is indebted for his safety to the old lord Gonzalo, a counsellor of the King of Naples, who placed food and magical books in the boat in which he was sent to sea. He reached the lonely island where he established his sorcerer's kingdom, and where he subsequently found an opportunity of avenging himself in his own fashion upon his enemies. He reproached himself severely for depriving his daughter, by his indifference, of her inheritance. The aim he sets before himself, and which he pursues with all the resources of his black lore, is her restoration to her birthright. He thinks of himself only in the second place. He is no longer a dreamer, careless of all outward things, but an energetic and imperious ruler, who causes not only the monster Caliban to tremble, but also all good and gentle spirits. He assumes a tone of hardness and severity even with his daughter and Ferdinand, but the inner kernel of his being remains kind and good. He is determined to right the injustice he has suffered, but his nature does not dispose him towards a base or overpowering vengeance; he is always noble and acts with moderation; he is kind but not weak. This is evident from his design of avenging himself by marrying his daughter Miranda to Ferdinand. Under the circumstances it is only natural that these two lovable beings should, by falling in love with each other at first sight, contribute unconsciously to the execution of his plan. We find in Miranda no strong or prominent characteristics, but she charms us by her harmonious, pure, and limpid disposition. Hers is a silent, self-contained nature, which hides inexhaustible treasures of feeling and tenderness in the depths of its heart. But these feelings are dominant, and are first awakened to unfold in all their richness and brilliancy through the appearance of an ideally beautiful being, who is the only man except her father she has ever seen. She

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had no opportunities in the solitude in which she grew up of acquiring those gifts and graces a life in society both requires and develops. She speaks little, but her fancy is lively, and her mind, owing to the isolation in which she has lived, is as pure as when it came from the Creator's hand. There are, however, virtues which women can acquire far from the world and society, in intimate and profound communion with nature only. Those virtues Miranda possessed in a high degree. She is sensitive, compassionate, full of sympathy for suffering, modest. Her father's words have often hinted at a higher rank, but these hints awake in her neither curiosity nor longing. When she hears that her father is a Duke, she only fears lest he, who has hitherto been so good a father to her, may not really be her parent; and when she finds th. this idea is unfounded, she only regrets the trouble she must have been to him when she was little. Compassion is the keynote of her soul. When Prospero raises the frightful tempest, her sympathy with the sufferers who are tossed in danger of their lives is roused to the uttermost. Prospero answers her several times with consoling words when she has not spoken, but only implored pity by her silent looks, as in the first act during the storm, when he assures her that he has so ordered things that not one of these shall be injured. At the first moment of her meeting with Ferdinand, speaking glances pass between them. He believes that he alone has been saved; he supposes from the song of the airy spirits that his father is dead; he wanders about in sore need. Prospero accuses him harshly of having come into the island with the intention of taking possession. His ideal beauty arouses Miranda's pity for him, quite as much as his unhappy condition. She deems her father's accusations unjust, for her innocent mind cannot conceive that so fair an outside can conceal anything evil. Her love grows out of this confidence, and in her naïveté she does not hide her feelings for a moment. Her heart is given straightway

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to the love-inspiring being, who, on his side, thinks her created of every creature's best. The obstacles which Prospero purposely puts in her way, his pretended harshness and severity to Ferdinand, rapidly ripen the innocent relation between them. He gives Ferdinand heavy and menial tasks, wishing to prove the man and his love. Miranda offers to help him, but he goes on bearing his burden patiently for her sake. Her innocent preference is not shaken when Prospero tells her that other men are as much handsomer than Ferdinand as Ferdinand is than Caliban. She listens to Ferdinand's declaration of love with silent rapture; in her humility, she weeps tears which spring from the conviction of her own unworthiness. She artlessly betrays the sentiments of her heart. She calls him her husband against her father's will, and gives her heart to him apparently against his wish. She breaks her filial bonds, but only in the sole case in which custom and religion consider this permissible, nay, imperative—leaving father and mother to follow a husband. And Prospero blesses the sudden promise with one more trial of the truth and purity of Ferdinand's love, making him swear to respect Miranda's innocence. This last trial is also borne successfully by the lovers, as is conveyed in a refined manner in the scene when they are found in the lonely cave calmly playing a game of chess. Shakespeare's female characters, says Mrs. Jameson, if classed according to the influence passion and fantasy have upon them, unfold themselves from Juliet to Miranda, growing one by one more and more ideal, until the last is altogether so gentle, that she is lifted above all earthly impulses, that only the feeling of sympathy which moves and inspires her seems to connect her with this world.

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"HENRY VIII."

Catherine of Arragon—Anne Boleyn.

In order to have a right conception of the historical accuracy as well as the artistic perfection of Shakespeare's striking portraiture of Catherine of Arragon, the unfortunate Queen of England, we must glance back at her life and the prominent traits of her character, as they appeared during the time preceding that in which the scene of the drama is laid. This examination inspires us with new admiration for the art with which Shakespeare improved upon the materials he selected.

Catherine was born in 1485, the youngest daughter of Ferdinand the Catholic and Isabella of Castile. Her mind was not extraordinarily intelligent, nor was her appearance remarkably beautiful. From her mother, Isabella, she inherited some of her pride and self-will, but nothing of her renowned beauty or her high intellectual gifts. She was brought up in severe virtue by this mother, one of the most distinguished women who ever sat upon a throne, and, as was natural, considering the characters of her parents and the intellectual tendencies of the Spanish people, was nurtured in profound bigotry. Although she was far from possessing powers of mind to be compared with those of her mother, it cannot be denied that she possessed a keen understanding and a refined judgment. She was, moreover, simple and earnest in all her ways, rich in household virtues, full of kindness and benevolence, of a naturally cheerful temperament, and most strictly and sincerely pious. As a child of five she was betrothed to Arthur, Prince of Wales, the eldest son of King Henry VII. of England. In her sixteenth year, 1501, she was solemnly conducted to the land of which she had been selected queen, and immediately married to the prince, who was two years her

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junior. Arthur died two months after this event. King Henry VII., whose prominent characteristics were avarice and grasping ambition, found it difficult to part with the rich dowry which Catherine had brought. He also regretted the disturbance of the great political arrangements he had hoped to found upon his new connection with one of the most powerful monarchs. Hence he hit upon the idea of keeping both, through the marriage of the young widow with his second son Henry, afterwards Henry VIII. The Pope gave the necessary dispensation, and the eighteen-year-old princess was married to the Prince of Wales, then only twelve, who stoutly resisted the marriage with his brother's widow, and only consented very much against his will. The king, too, regretted it keenly after it was accomplished. He was disposed to consider the illness that seized him soon after as a judgment upon this iniquitous marriage, which he annulled shortly before his death, making Henry pledge himself solemnly in writing never to renew it. Henry, prompted perhaps by a trait which afterwards became exceedingly prominent in his character, the dislike to anything that was forced upon him by others, and determination to possess whatever others were inclined to withhold from him, or perhaps because Catherine had really won his heart by her gentleness and amiability, gave his signature most unwillingly, and Catherine was not sent home to her own country. On the contrary, Henry, when he became king by his father's death, announced that he would maintain his promise to her. So the king, who was eighteen, re-married his brother's widow, who was twenty-four. The marriage was celebrated with great solemnity on the 3rd of June 1509. Catherine's influence upon Henry was good, so much so that English writers have said that, if the king had died during his married life with her, he would have left behind him the reputation of being a splendid and capable prince, and not, as is now the case, that of a hateful libertine, and

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the most oppressive tyrant that ever wore the crown of England. Their married life, too, although he was guilty of many infidelities, and was much opposed to her exaggerated practices of devotion, was on the whole peaceful and happy.

When, however, Anne Boleyn appeared, in 1527, as one of the ladies of the queen's court, the king's conscientious scruples began to awaken with regard to his marriage with his brother's widow. He caused the question to be secretly put in Rome whether the Pope, if the queen entered a cloister, were disposed to authorise him by a dispensation to contract another marriage. It is comprehensible that Catherine should experience bitter feelings when she heard of this step. Her jealousy was awakened, her dignity was wounded, she feared that her daughter's legitimacy might be called in question. She attributed this act to Cardinal Wolsey's influence, who at that time entirely ruled the king, and whom she had more than once rebuked for his conduct towards her, conduct unbecoming a divine.

For six years the transaction dragged on. Mrs. Jameson quotes a chronicle which says that all the men in England, especially the nobles and priests, were on the king's side, but all the women in England clung to the queen, in whose position they saw a representative of their own. They held that no woman could consider herself safe in her marriage or her honour if, after a union of twenty years, she could be thus robbed of her rights. The influence of women upon public opinion, and the clamour raised in consequence, constrained the king to pause for some time in his purposes to break off negotiations with Rome, and to banish from his court Anne Boleyn, the principal cause of this sudden awakening of scruples. Cardinal Campeggio, called by Shakespeare Campeius, sent from Rome in 1528 to arrange the affair, tried to persuade Catherine to enter a cloister, but she was unwilling. "I am," she said, "the king's faithful wife and married to him, and if at our wedding all doctors

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had been dead and no law or learning had been found among men, still I cannot believe that the Roman court and the English court would have agreed to what you call shameful and unlawful. I am his wife," she said once more, "and will pray for him." Her resistance could only win for her honour and respect, but in point of fact it altered nothing. Henry's passion for Anne Boleyn drew him on irresistibly. In 1535 he ordered Catherine to betake herself to another abode, and forbade her henceforth to look upon herself as his lawful wife. With quiet steadfastness the queen answered, "Wherever I may retire, no one can take my right from me." But she could not hinder the king from marrying Anne Boleyn in 1532, without waiting for the papal decision regarding the annulment of his first marriage. Catherine never submitted to the divorce, at last pronounced by Cranmer in 1533, and died on the 29th of January 1536, in the fiftieth year of her age, it may well be said of a broken heart.

Shakespeare has so far erred from history as to place Catherine's death before the birth of Queen Elizabeth. Thus he serves his purpose without inadmissibly perverting or actually displacing any historical event. The birth of Elizabeth, under whose powerful and victorious reign Shakespeare lived and wrote, was necessarily the fortunate and auspicious close of the play. The formal legitimacy of this birth depended upon the circumstance whether it took place before or after the death of Catherine, and to place the great queen's legitimacy properly before the spectator or reader, the poet committed this little anachronism, for which no one can reproach him. On the other hand, the manner in which the poet, who lived at the court of Queen Elizabeth, and for whom her favour was of infinite value, especially as regards his theatrical undertakings, constructed his play and grouped and characterised the personages, is a noble witness to his independence, integrity, and truthfulness. In spite of his high and just veneration for Elizabeth, he is far from stigmatising or placing in an unpleasant light, in flattery to the

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reigning sovereign, the mother of her detested predecessor, to whom English history has given the ugly name of Bloody Mary. Certainly the close of the play is a homage to Elizabeth, with its brilliant prophetic passage:

> *Cran.* This royal infant—heaven still move about her!—
> Though in her cradle, yet now promises
> Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,
> Which time shall bring to ripeness: she shall be—
> But few now living can behold that goodness—
> A pattern to all princes living with her,
> And all that shall succeed: Saba was never
> More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue
> Than this pure soul shall be: all princely graces,
> That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,
> With all the virtues that attend the good,
> Shall still be doubled on her: truth shall nurse her,
> Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her:
> She shall be loved and feared: her own shall bless her;
> Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,
> And hang their heads with sorrow: good grows with her:
> In her days every man shall eat in safety,
> Under his own vine, what he plants; and sing
> The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours:
> God shall be truly known; and those about her
> From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,
> And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> She shall be, to the happiness of England,
> An aged princess; many days shall see her,
> And yet no day without a deed to crown it.
> Would I had known no more! but she must die,—
> She must, the saints must have her; yet a virgin,
> A most unspotted lily shall she pass
> To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her,
>
> *Henry VIII.*, act v. scene 5.

No doubt it is a deep satisfaction which the poet permits to himself of prophesying thus *ex posteriore*, and generally this method of bringing about an effect so popular with dramatic writers is not desirable. But we can hardly blame the English poet of that era when he does homage in this way to his great queen, who, though she may appear in an unamiable light to posterity, really created the greatness

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of the English people and state. Nor has he sacrificed his veracious picture of Catherine's noble character to his veneration for the reigning queen. Catherine is the pivot, the heroine of the piece, around whom, together with Cardinal Wolsey, the interest revolves. She is portrayed with all her good noble qualities, in all the calm venerable dignity she never loses for a moment, through all the misfortunes, torments, and griefs which befall her. Schlegel remarks that Shakespeare shows his genius and wisdom in the literal exactness and apparent want of art with which he presents certain historical events and characters. Catherine's portraiture is a speaking witness to the truth of this subtle observation. On one side the poet puts before us with truth and beauty a very individual character, on the other he teaches the wise lesson drawn from the roots of all moral feeling, that womanly purity and virtue, even if wanting in outward attraction, has power to move the human heart and influence it strongly. This queen, robbed of the splendour of her position, who has neither youth, beauty, nor intellectual gifts, in short, none of the attractions which usually arouse sympathy for a heroine, yet appeals to our holiest and purest sentiments. If we inquire how this wonderful result is attained, the first prominent quality that strikes us in the character is its perfect sincerity, its honourable uprightness of heart. It is often observed that people who are themselves free from falsehood and artifice, and who therefore consider others incapable of such practices, are easily betrayed and fall into the nets of those whose vicious cunning considers this noble quality as a weakness. But though this is often the case in real life, it is not so with Catherine. It is precisely the limpid truth of her nature, wedded to clearness and sharpness of understanding, that enables her to see through the double-tongued character of Cardinal Wolsey. In spite of her sense of inability successfully to combat his wily plans, expressed in the words, "I am a simple woman, much too weak to oppose your cunning,"

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she leaves him no doubt that she has seen through his intrigues, nor does she make any secret of the profound contempt she feels for him, although she knows quite well that she will be defeated in this unequal fight of tyrannical force and skilful fraud, combined against a weak, forsaken woman. Some other qualities are found in Catherine's character which seem conflicting, and yet combine in noble harmony. She is filled with the pride natural to her training and Castilian birth; nevertheless, her speech and demeanour are simple. She clings with masculine resolution to what she terms her holy and inalienable rights, yet she meets the smaller wrongs inflicted upon her with gentle patience and resignation. Her upright and sincere piety makes her gentle, yet she often shows in sudden outbursts clear indications of a lively, nay, a fiery temper. Her kindness and amiability are often crossed with symptoms of hardness.

The first scene in which Shakespeare introduces Catherine is taken direct from history. She eloquently pleads the cause of the people, whom Cardinal Wolsey has loaded with excessive taxes and burdens. Her whole behaviour in this scene shows her best qualities, her sane judgment, her strong determination to aid the people over whom she is queen, her piety and benevolent disposition. She does not hesitate to oppose Wolsey, who completely rules the king. She beseeches the Duke of Buckingham's steward, through whose dismissal Wolsey wishes to bring about his lord's ruin by a sentence for high treason, not to let himself be induced, in revenge for his dismissal, to lay upon his conscience the guilt of false witness against his master. While still in possession of her position and rights, she uses them so well and royally, that we feel the more grieved when we see her descend from the throne to suffer painful injuries and humiliations. Already in the second act the storm is gathering and preparations are in course for the divorce. The Duke of Norfolk expresses the universal sympathy felt

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by nobles and populace for the queen thus threatened in her dearest interests:

> *Nor.* He (Cardinal Wolsey) counsels a divorce; a loss of her
> That, like a jewel, has hung twenty years
> About his neck, yet never lost her lustre;
> Of her that loves him with that excellence
> That angels love good men with; even of her
> That, when the greatest stroke of fortune falls,
> Will bless the king.—*Henry VIII.*, act ii. scene 2.

Doubly interesting is the scene in which Anne Boleyn, whose charms have so suddenly awakened conscientious scruples in the sensuous, passionate king regarding his marriage with the elderly Catherine, expresses her sympathy with the sorrowful story of her mistress. In this scene Catherine is placed in a clear light by the praises of her servant and rival, and further the poet gives us with admirable skill, through Anne's expressions, a deep insight into her own character. He shows us a being capable of noble impulses overlaid by vanity and longing for riches. She, who has just expressed profound sympathy with the queen, does not hesitate to accept the position of Marchioness of Pembroke offered by the king, and accompanied with a magnificent gift in money, for which she thanks him warmly. She must, nevertheless, be perfectly aware of the meaning of this gift. Hence it is manifest she does not fear, even before the divorce is proclaimed, to set herself upon the throne whence the predecessor she commiserates in touching terms has been forced to descend. Anne says to an old court-lady:

> *Anne.* Here's the pang that pinches:
> His highness having lived so long with her, and she
> So good a lady that no tongue could ever
> Pronounce dishonour of her; by my life,
> She never knew harm-doing: O, now, after
> So many courses of the sun enthroned,
> Still growing in a majesty and pomp, the which
> To leave is a thousand-fold more bitter than

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'Tis sweet at first to acquire,—after this process,
To give her the avaunt! it is a pity
Would move a monster.

. . . . . .

O, God's will! much better
She ne'er had known pomp: though't be temporal,
Yet, if that quarrel, fortune, do divorce
It from the bearer, 'tis a sufferance panging
As soul and body's severing.—*Henry VIII.*, act ii. scene 3.

The old lady with whom she speaks, and who is characterised in an inimitable manner, reflects the general sympathy in the words: "Hearts of most hard temper, melt and lament for her," and adds sadly, "Alas, poor lady! she's a stranger now again." To which Anne answers:

So much the more
Must pity drop upon her. Verily,
I swear, 'tis better to be lowly born,
And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perk'd up in a glistering grief,
And wear a golden sorrow.—*Henry VIII.*, act ii. scene 3.

The attentive reader must observe with amusement how these two children of this world try, each of them, to lie to themselves and to each other. The old faded and disenchanted woman, the young girl in the bloom of luxuriant youth and loveliness, whose throbbing breast longs after pleasure, splendour, and brilliancy, which the favour of the king promises in unlimited degree, are a curious contrast. The old court lady, who has probably never been content so long as she saw, or thought to see, another receiving more favours at court than herself, must be bursting with envy when she hears of Anne's exaltation. She, who would never have hesitated to sell her virtue for show, splendour, and pride of place, if she could have found a purchaser, says hypocritically, "Our content is our best having;" and Anne, who in her glowing fancy sees herself already Queen of England, answers, "By my troth and maidenhead I would not be a queen." Hereby

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she betrays, in pitying Catherine for losing her regal splendour, her own soul's desire, for she deems that to ascend a throne must be the greatest of all bliss. This is shown in the way she receives the announcement brought by the Lord Chamberlain of her elevation to a high position. Yet, in spite of the old lady's biting and ironical remarks, she keeps on her mask, and says:

> *Anne.* Good lady,
> Make yourself mirth with your particular fancy,
> And leave me out on't. Would I had no being,
> If this salute my blood a jot: it faints me
> To think what follows.—*Henry VIII.*, act ii. scene 3.

It would have been better for her if she had remained true also in her actions to this expression of feeling. Beside her own fate, that of the queen she commiserates, may be called mild. But she cannot resist the temptations that assail her. She mounts the steps of the throne, whence she pushed a predecessor nobler and purer in character than herself, and expiates by a bloody death the brief moments in which her sensuous and vain temperament was satisfied. In the skilful conduct of this play, in which every rough or forced effect is avoided, it is noticeable that Shakespeare never brings about any meeting between these two victims of a passionate, sensual, and violent despot.

After the important scene we have noticed follows the great scene of the trial of the queen at Blackfriars, depicted faithfully after the Chronicles and other historical sources. According to Hall's Chronicle, Catherine answered the long speeches, the theological and juridical subtleties of her opponents, in the following simple, moderate, and resolute words: "I am a woman, and I have not the wisdom or learning to answer these opinions; but I am convinced that neither the king's father or mine would have consented to our marriage if they had considered it unlawful. And when you say that the affair should be committed to the

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judgment of eight men of the kingdom that the king's conscience may be quieted, I will pray to heaven that his grace may be granted a quiet conscience, and this shall be your answer, that I tell you that I am his rightful wife, and lawfully married to him though I am unworthy; and I will therefore wait until the Romish court, that knew of the beginning, shall also decide upon the end." Shakespeare causes the queen, after her solemn call before the court, composed of Cardinal Wolsey, Cardinal Campeius, the Roman nuncio, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishops of Lincoln, Ely, Rochester, and St. Asaph, to speak as follows:

Cath. Sir, I desire you do me right and justice;
And to bestow your pity on me: for
I am a most poor woman, and a stranger,
Born out of your dominions; having here
No judge indifferent, nor no more assurance
Of equal friendship and proceeding. Alas, sir,
In what have I offended you? what cause
Hath my behaviour given to your displeasure,
That thus you should proceed to put me off,
And take your good grace from me? Heaven witness,
I have been to you a true and humble wife,
At all times to your will conformable;
Ever in fear to kindle your dislike,
Yea, subject to your countenance, glad or sorry,
As I saw it inclined: when was the hour
I ever contradicted your desire,
Or made it not mine too? Or which of your friends
Have I not strove to love, although I knew
He were mine enemy? what friend of mine
That had to him derived your anger, did I
Continue in my liking? nay, gave notice
He was from thence discharged? Sir, call to mind
That I have been your wife, in this obedience,
Upward of twenty years, and have been blessed
With many children by you: if, in the course
And process of this time, you can report,
And prove it too, against mine honour aught,
My bond to wedlock, or my love and duty,
Against your sacred person, in God's name,
Turn me away; and let the foul'st contempt
Shut door upon me, and so give me up
To the sharp'st kind of justice. Please you, sir,

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The king, your father, was reputed for
A prince most prudent, of an excellent
And unmatch'd wit and judgement: Ferdinand,
My father, king of Spain, was reckon'd one
The wisest prince that there had reign'd by many
A year before: it is not to be question'd
That they had gather'd a wise council to them
Of every realm, that did debate this business,
Who deem'd our marriage lawful: wherefore I humbly
Beseech you, sir, to spare me, till I may
Be by my friends in Spain advised; whose counsel
I will implore: if not, i' the name of God,
Your pleasure be fulfill'd!—*Henry VIII.*, act ii. scene 4.

With pride and decision she rejects a tribunal in which Cardinal Wolsey sits, for she knows him to be her deadly enemy:

Cath. I do believe,
Induced by potent circumstances, that
You are mine enemy, and make my challenge
You shall not be my judge: for it is you
Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me;
Which God's dew quench! Therefore I say again,
I utterly abhor, yea, from my soul
Refuse you for my judge; whom, yet once more,
I hold my most malicious foe, and think not
At all a friend to truth.—*Henry VIII.*, act ii. scene 4.

Wolsey defends himself in subtle phrases full of wounded feeling against the queen's accusation. He is astonished she should belie her gentle and charitable disposition on this grave occasion. He assures her that she wrongs him, he has no spleen against her, "no injustice for her, or any." The proceedings against her rest upon the full powers given him by Rome. He calls the king himself to witness that he has "never blown this coal." He begs the queen to "unthink her speaking," and speak of it no more. But Catherine, unshaken in her estimate, goes on:

Cath. I am a simple woman, much too weak
To oppose your cunning. You're meek and humble-mouth'd;
You sign your place and calling, in full seeming,
With meekness and humility; but your heart

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Is cramm'd with arrogancy, spleen, and pride.
You have, by fortune and his highness' favours,
Gone slightly o'er low steps and now are mounted
Where powers are your retainers, and your words,
Domestics to you, serve your will as 't please
Yourself pronounce their office. I must tell you,
You tender more your person's honour than
Your high profession spiritual: that again
I do refuse you for my judge; and here,
Before you all, appeal unto the pope,
To bring my whole cause 'fore his holiness
And to be judged by him.

. . . . . .

I will not tarry; no, nor ever more
Upon this business my appearance make
In any of their courts.—*Henry VIII.*, act ii. scene 4.

Proudly she quits the tribunal. The king closes the session. The scene in the second act, giving the visit of the two cardinals to Catherine, is also taken from history, but is clearly arranged and carried out by Shakespeare. The sources we find relate that Cardinal Wolsey and Campeggio went at the king's order to the queen, and found her occupied in work among her women. Wolsey spoke to her in Latin, upon which she asked him to speak English, although she understood Latin. Then said the cardinal: "We have both come here to learn your intention, and how you mean to act in this affair between you and the king, and also to tell you privately our opinion and give you our advice, as we are prompted to by our zeal and our devotion to your grace." The queen answered: "My lords, I thank you for your good-will, but as to answering your question, that I cannot do so suddenly; for I was sitting at work among my maidens, thinking but little of such things, which require longer study, and a wiser head than mine to answer men so noble and so learned as you are. I have need of good counsel in this affair, which concerns me so nearly; but such good counsel as I can find in England, or such as is here offered me in friendship, helps me but little. Do you believe, I ask you, that any

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Englishman would advise or serve me against the will of the king whose subject he is? No, truly! And as to counsellors whom I can trust, they are not here; they are in Spain, in my native land.* Alas! I am a poor woman, wanting in wit and understanding to answer two such wise and experienced men as you are in an affair so weighty. I beg you to accord to me your kind and impartial judgment in this your action, for I am a simple woman, robbed of friendship and counsel, a stranger in this land, and whatever your opinion may be, I will not refuse it, but listen to it gladly." She declines to acknowledge the judgment of divorce subscribed by Henry, which has been confirmed by Parliament. She declares that she is Henry's wife and not his subject, she will never give up the name of queen, but will continue until the day of her death to look upon herself as the king's spouse. When the protocol of the conference is put before her for signature, she strikes out in sharp anger the expression "widowed princess," which has been applied to her therein.

Now let us see what Shakespeare has made of the speeches and actions recorded by history. This examination will not decrease our admiration for his powers of adaptation. We find Catherine sitting at work surrounded by her women. Her spirits are heavily weighed down by trouble, she will try music as a distraction. At her order one of the women sings these lovely verses:

Song.

Orpheus with his lute made trees,
And the mountain tops that freeze,
  Bow themselves when he did sing:
To his music plants and flowers
Ever sprung; as sun and showers
  There had made a lasting spring.

---

* Shakespeare gives these words thus:

Cath. They that my trust must grow to, live not here:
They are, as all my other comforts, far hence
In mine own country, lords.—*Henry VIII.*, act iii. scene 1.

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Everything that heard him play,
Even the billows of the sea,
Hung their heads, and then lay by.
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing, die.—*Henry VIII.*, act iii. scene 1.

The two cardinals are announced. Their visit produces an unpleasant effect upon the queen; she cannot believe that they have come with good intentions:

Cath. What can be their business
With me, a poor weak woman, fall'n from favour?
I do not like their coming. Now I think on't.
They should be good men; their affairs as righteous:
But all hoods make not monks.—*Henry VIII.*, act iii. scene 1.

In the ensuing conversation she at first refuses to go with the cardinals into another room where no one can be present at their conference, but will hear what they have to say in presence of her women, because, she says, she has never yet done anything "that deserves a corner," and she wishes all women had such a conscience. With a noble consciousness of her innocence she continues:

Cath. My lords, I care not, so much I am happy
Above a number, if my actions
Were tried by every tongue, every eye saw 'em,
Envy and base opinion set against 'em,
I know my life so even. If your business
Seek me out, and that way I am wife in,
Out with it boldly: truth loves open dealing.
Henry VIII., act iii. scene 1.

Shakespeare then exactly follows the conversation as given in the sources mentioned above. First Wolsey's speech in Latin, and the queen's request that he will speak English, as a strange tongue makes her cause more strange. Then both cardinals assure her that she wronged Wolsey in her bitter accusation before the court, and that they were come to offer her their service and support. She says that she feels too weak to give them a carefully considered answer. She preserves her calm and regal composure until

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Campeius, supported by Wolsey, advises her to place her cause implicitly in the king's hands. Then her anger breaks out, because she knows that, owing to the character and momentary disposition of the king, such a proceeding could not fail to be her ruin:

> *Cath.* Ye tell me what ye wish for both,—my ruin:
> Is this your Christian counsel? out upon ye!
> Heaven is above all yet; there sits a judge
> That no king can corrupt.
> *Cam.* Your rage mistakes us.
> *Cath.* The more shame for ye: holy men I thought ye,
> Upon my soul, two reverend cardinal virtues;
> But cardinal sins and hollow hearts I fear ye:
> Mend 'em for shame, my lords. Is this your comfort?
> The cordial that ye bring a wretched lady.
> A woman lost among ye, laugh'd at, scorn'd?
> . . . . . .
> Ye turn me into nothing: woe unto ye
> And all such false professors! Would you have me—
> If you have any justice, any pity;
> If ye be anything but churchmen's habits—
> Put my sick cause into his hands that hates me?
> Alas, has banish'd me his bed already,
> His love, too long ago! I am old, my lords,
> And all the fellowship I hold now with him
> Is only my obedience. What can happen
> To me above this wretchedness? all your studies
> Make me a curse like this.—*Henry VIII.*, act iii. scene i.

With unshaken resolution she refuses to surrender her rights by her own deed:

> My lord, I dare not make myself so guilty,
> To give up willingly that noble title
> Your master wed me to: nothing but death
> Shall e'er divorce my dignities.—*Henry VIII.*, act iii. scene i.

The cardinals are obliged to depart unsatisfied. This scene arouses our admiration for the keen-sightedness with which the queen recognises the trap set for her by the cardinals, and for the immovable resolution with which she clings to what she considers her sacred right: but we also feel pity for the unhappy, forsaken woman. After her

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angry outbreak follows the inevitable reaction, when she utters the mournful lament:

> *Cath.* Would I had never trod this English earth,
> Or felt the flatteries that grow upon it!
> Ye have angels' faces, but heaven knows your hearts.
> What will become of me now, wretched lady?
> I am the most unhappy woman living.—*Henry VIII.*, act iii. scene i.

Once again Shakespeare brings Catherine before us in that dying scene of great and striking beauty. Some time has elapsed since the meeting with the two cardinals. The edifice of Wolsey's mighty power has fallen, Anne Boleyn is queen. She remains but a short period at the summit of power and splendour, whence so terrible a fall awaits her, leaving nothing behind her except the fame of giving birth to the greatest queen that ever sat on the English throne. Wolsey made himself hated by both queens. When he interested himself in procuring the king's divorce from Catherine, it was by no means for the purpose of crowning Anne Boleyn. His design was to marry Henry to a princess of some powerful European house, and thus obtain support in his ambitious political plans. Anne knew this well, and therefore did not hold out to him a helping hand when, through his own fault, he fell under the king's displeasure, since, through his want of foresight, an estimate of his enormous riches, and still worse, his secret correspondence with the Pope, passed into the king's hands. Henry's persistent efforts to induce Catherine to abandon her rights, and recognise, to the advantage of Anne Boleyn's children, the illegitimacy of her own daughter, were powerless against the queen's invulnerable resolution. Hence in 1533 a sentence of divorce was pronounced against her. She was indeed hardly used, and left almost entirely without servants, as those who still treated her as Queen of England were removed, and she would not suffer those who called her the "widowed princess" to remain. During the last period

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of her life she lived at Kimbolton. Her nephew, the Emperor Charles V., repeatedly offered her a magnificent refuge, but she did not wish to carry her unhappiness and humiliation into another country, and remained in her solitude. Even her daughter was taken from her. She pined away in grief, but her wounded pride, despised love, the angry jealousy of a woman driven from her place, never found sharp utterance. Perhaps on this account they preyed upon her already failing health. The Chronicles have handed down a touching letter to the king written at this period, which we give here, as Shakespeare evidently modelled the piteous scene of Catherine's death after the thoughts and feelings herein expressed:

MY MOST DEAR LORD, KING AND HUSBAND, — The hour of my death now approaching, I cannot choose but out of the love I bear you, advise you of your soul's health, which you ought to prefer before all considerations of the world or flesh whatsoever; for which you have cast me into many calamities and yourself into many troubles; but I forgive you all, and pray God to do likewise; for the rest, I commend unto you Mary our daughter, beseeching you to be a father to her, as I have heretofore desired. I must entreat you also to respect my maids, and give them in marriage, which is not much, they being but three, and all my other servants a year's pay, besides their due, least otherwise they be unprovided for; lastly, I make this vow, that mine eyes desire you above all things. Farewell.

Shakespeare leads up very effectively to Catherine's death scene by describing the death of Wolsey, given by her faithful marshal, Griffith. The dying queen wishes rest and peace to him who died in peace with God, but she sketches his faults accurately:

Cath. So may he rest; his faults lie gently on him!
Yet thus far, Griffith, give me leave to speak him,
And yet with charity. He was a man
Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking
Himself with princes; one that, by suggestion,
Tied all the kingdom: simony was fair-play;
His own opinion was his law: i' the presence
He would say untruths; and be ever double

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Both in his words and meaning: he was never,
But where he meant to ruin, pitiful:
His promises were, as he then was, mighty;
But his performance, as he is now, nothing:
Of his own body he was ill, and gave
The clergy ill example.—*Henry VIII.*, act iv. scene 2.

Griffith praises the Cardinal's good points:

Grif. This cardinal,
Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly
Was fashion'd to much honour from his cradle.
He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one;
Exceeding wise, fair-spoken, and persuading:
Lofty and sour to them that loved him not;
But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.
And though she were unsatisfied in getting,
Which was a sin, yet in bestowing, madam,
He was most princely: ever witness for him
Those twins of learning that he raised in you,
Ipswich and Oxford! one of which fell with him,
Unwilling to outlive the good that did it;
The other, though unfinish'd, yet so famous,
So excellent in art, and still so rising,
That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue.
His overthrow heap'd happiness upon him;
For then, and not till then, he felt himself,
And found the blessedness of being little:
And, to add greater honours to his age
Than man could give him, he died fearing God.
Henry VIII., act iv. scene 2.

Not without intention has Shakespeare here given this brilliant eulogy of Wolsey. By the manner in which the dying Catherine receives it, he shows that his heroine, in the face of death which she believed was caused in a great measure by the wicked arts of him thus praised, in spite of the hatred with which she has always regarded her worst enemy, is still magnanimous enough to recognise the truth of Griffith's words:

Cath. Whom I most hated living, thou hast made me,
With thy religious truth and modesty,
Now in his ashes honour: peace be with him!
Henry VIII., act iv. scene 2.

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The amiable and friendly manner in which she says to her woman, when she aids her, "Set me lower; I have not long to trouble thee," touches us deeply. After a short sleep, during which, in a consoling dream, she sees a choir of angels, whose brilliance enfolds her like a sun, and who bring her a forecast of eternal bliss, she wakes, with features so changed, and of so cold and earthly a pallor, that Griffith and the woman perceive that her last moment has come. But even now, when death is close beside her, her inborn Castilian pride is unbroken, she clings fast to her right to be treated with royal ceremony, and grows angry when the messenger who brings her the last joy of her life, the announcement of the visit of Capucius, ambasssador from her nephew Charles V., calls her "Your Highness," instead of "Your Grace," as becomes a queen. She, who has only a few minutes to live, orders that he may never again come into her presence. She is glad to see a messenger from her nephew, but when she asks why he has come, and he replies:

> *Cap.* First, mine own service to your grace; the next,
> The king's request that I would visit you;
> Who grieves much for your weakness, and by me
> Sends you his princely commendations,
> And heartily entreats you take good comfort.
>
> *Henry VIII.*, act iv. scene 2.

She answers with bitter irony:

> *Cath.* O my good lord, that comfort comes too late;
> 'Tis like a pardon after execution;
> That gentle physic, given in time, had cured me;
> But now I am past all comfort here, but prayers.
>
> *Henry VIII.*, act iv. scene 2.

She asks after the king's health, wishes "that he may ever flourish" when she "shall dwell with worms," and gives Capucius a letter for him, the same, no doubt, which we have quoted from the Chronicle. She recites the contents of the letter in beautiful verse, that furnishes another instance

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of Shakespeare's power of giving in free and poetic form an almost literal version of his literary sources:

> *Cath.* In which I have commended to his goodness
> The model of our chaste loves, his young daughter;
> The dews of heaven fall thick in blessings on her!
> Beseeching him to give her virtuous breeding,—
> She is young, and of a noble modest nature,
> I hope she will deserve well,—and a little
> To love her for her mother's sake, that loved him,
> Heaven knows how dearly. My next poor petition
> Is, that his noble grace would have some pity
> Upon my wretched women, that so long
> Have follow'd both my fortunes faithfully;
> Of which there is not one, I dare avow,
> And now I should not lie, but will deserve,
> For virtue and true beauty of the soul,
> For honesty and decent carriage,
> A right good husband, let him be a noble:
> And, sure, those men are happy that shall have 'em.
> The last is, for my men; they are the poorest,
> But poverty could never draw 'em from me;
> That they may have their wages duly paid 'em,
> And something over to remember me by;
> If heaven had pleased to have given me longer life
> And able means, we had not parted thus.
> These are the whole contents: and, good my lord,
> By that you love the dearest in this world,
> As you wish Christian peace to souls departed,
> Stand these poor people's friend, and urge the king
> To do me this last right.—*Henry VIII.*, act iv. scene 2.

Capucius gives his sacred promise. She sends a touching message of farewell to the king:

> *Cath.* I thank you, honest lord. Remember me
> In all humility unto his highness:
> Say his long trouble now is passing
> Out of this world; tell him, in death I bless'd him.
> *Henry VIII.*, act iv. scene 2.

In her very last moments, besides the comforting consciousness of her pure and spotless life, she feels the pride of her regal rank and royal descent. Both inspire the last orders she gives for her funeral:

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When I am dead, good wench,
Let me be used with honour: strew me over
With maiden flowers, that all the world may know
I was a chaste wife to my grave: embalm me,
Then lay me forth; although unqueen'd, yet like
A queen, and daughter to a king, inter me.

Henry VIII., act iv. scene 2.

The epilogue to this drama, whether written by Shakespeare, or, as many contend, by Ben Jonson, defines well the meaning of the play, when it says that the poet relies for its success upon "the merciful construction of good women." For this piece and its female characters should indeed inspire women with profound gratitude towards a poet who represents a queen and heroine who is above all things an excellent woman, displaying in the midst of frightful trials all the best womanly qualities, thus proving that a noble, pure feminine heart is the home of the noblest virtue, the highest truth and purity. Seldom has more flattering homage been paid to the sex than by Shakespeare in his presentation of Catherine of Arragon.

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CONCLUSION

We have ended. They have all passed before our vision, these female figures a mighty genius created, inspiring them with warm fresh life, and filling them with the breath of his spirit. We seem to have lived and suffered in their company. They have passed before us, powerful and terrible criminals, and noble women diffusing happiness, joy, and blessing, the strong and the weak, the happy and the wretched. We have looked into their eyes, we have heard their voices. They have spoken of all the bliss and woe of earth, of all the riddles of man's breast, of virtue and vice, of love and hate, of heaven and hell. We have felt all springs that move the soul of mankind. The poet's magic wand has laid open the depths of woman's nature, wherein, beside lovely and exquisite emotions, terrible passions play their dangerous and fatal part. We take leave of the poet with thankfulness and wonder. But not for ever. We turn back to him continually, with constant new delight. We always thirst to drink at the fresh and inexhaustible fountain of his poetry; we lose ourselves in the beauty and eternal youth of his creations. We listen unwearied to his mighty harp, for—

> He sings of love and springtime, of the world's golden youth,
> Of freedom and of righteousness, of holiness and truth;
> He sings of all that's sweetest the heart of man that sways,
> He sings of all that's highest the heart of man to raise.

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